

SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
A FAITH INFORMED RESPONSE

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ABSTRACT
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The project addressed the lack of knowledge within the church concerning the issue of sexual and domestic violence endured by many. New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFF) of churches in Chicago, IL was the context. Three workshops targeted pastoral leadership, youth and the fellowship church memberships. Handouts included complete resource packages. Research methodology included pre/post workshop surveys, participant observations, personal journaling, post-workshop interviews and reflections. Findings showed improved general knowledge of the subject among attendees. Fellowship churches are supportive of expanding future opportunities for learning about sexual and domestic violence and providing tools and information to assist families in trouble.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank God for being my guide during this journey of enlightenment. I never could have done this work if it had not been for the Lord on my side.

Second, I give all my love and appreciation to my husband, Jim, who was my friend, my adviser, my co-planner in some instances, and just a loving presence along the way. His confidence and belief in me kept me going. I also acknowledge the love and support of my two sons—Jay and Chris. They make me proud every day to be their mother.

Third, I send much love to my church family—Greater Faith Ministries International—the incubator for much of what was accomplished during this long process. I love and appreciate all of you so much for your encouragement and love along the way.

Finally, I want to thank Apostle Kevin E. Dean and the New Vision of Faith Fellowship for understanding the importance of this work. The changes we will make together in the ministry will truly be a paradigm shift.

God bless you and keep you.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, a survivor of domestic violence and a truly classy lady. By her example, I was taught how to be a woman, a loving wife, and a dedicated and loving mother.

ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	Chicago Police Department
GFM	Greater Faith Ministries International
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NVOF	New Vision of Faith Ministries
NVOFF	New Vision of Faith Fellowship

INTRODUCTION

LESSONS LEARNED FROM TELEVISION

September 2009. During her television season premier week, Oprah Winfrey featured a very special guest, award winning singer and actress Whitney Houston. Oprah asked Houston a number of personal questions because she felt the world wanted to know what had been going on in Houston's life during her seven year absence from the entertainment business.

Houston was extremely forthcoming about her life, her career, and her marriage to singer Bobby Brown along with its resulting highs and lows. She described extreme behaviors from her husband that included emotional abuse, and as she admitted in the interview, "He spit on me." She stayed in the marriage for 16 years. Houston admitted that she loved her husband very much; but what do you do when things go bad in a relationship—to whom do you turn? Houston, like many other women, had to face some hard realities about her relationship with her husband. She believes an intervention by her mother, family members and friends saved her life. Her single, "I Look to You," is an expression, she says, of the strength she received from her mother and from the Lord.

In another episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, the special guest was a woman whose husband had shot her in the face with a shotgun. She was horribly disfigured by the shotgun blast, and has had to endure extensive reconstructive surgeries. Even with surgeries, she will never be the same attractive woman she was before violence in her home nearly ended her life.

During that interview, Oprah asked the woman if she had ever been hit by her husband prior to the explosive incident. She admitted to being *pushed*. Oprah was surprised that her guest did not think pushing and shoving were acts of violence.

Another guest during Oprah's 2009 season premier week, actress Mackenzie Phillips, admitted to a 10 year incestuous relationship with her father, John Phillips, of the singing group The Mamas and The Papas. Some members of Phillips' own family doubt the veracity of her admission. Regardless of whether Phillips' claim was true or false, statistics reveal that up to five percent of women are victims of incest.

Last year, actress/singer Jennifer Hudson lost three members of her family as a result of domestic violence. The ex-husband of Hudson's sister is the accused killer of Hudson's mother, brother and nephew (his stepson). Although devastated, Hudson said that her faith was sustaining her.

Domestic violence has no socio-economic lines of separation. It affects all people regardless of race, class or status. Most of the incidents described above (except the woman whose face was destroyed by a shotgun blast) involved people of notoriety. If daytime television is a reflection of American society—our cultural norms and values—we are certainly in trouble. It is hoped that this paper ultimately will speak to and for the countless unnamed women and children who are experiencing situations similar to those highlighted on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Individuals living in these kinds of situations are often hanging on the margins of society and alienated from community—even Whitney Houston admitted to seasons of separation from friends and family. These people often live double lives—one for display

to the outside world, and one of private suffering. The Church needs to recognize these troubled individuals, reach out to them and love them into healing.

This paper will address how the church has, in many ways, been a correspondent to the sin of sexual and domestic violence—through scriptural misinterpretation in preaching and teaching, and through lack of counseling, pastoral care and information/resources to help families in trouble. It is this writer's belief that the church has largely turned its back on those who live in fear in their own homes, and that it has failed to be a very present help for those in trouble.

This hypothesis will be supported by limited qualitative research including the results of pre and post surveys completed by attendees of informational workshops which were intended to raise awareness of what constitutes sexual abuse and domestic violence. The surveys were designed to pinpoint the level of knowledge and understanding of sexual abuse and domestic violence prior to the workshop and the knowledge gained as a result of attending the workshop. Also incorporated into this work are the stories of real women and their real abuse. They are stories of faith and survival.

This paper is designed to be a resource for pastors, lay leaders and all those interested in providing aid and comfort to powerless people living in desperate situations. The ultimate goal is to inform, educate, and enlighten the Christian community concerning a *very present problem* within the church—that is sexual abuse and domestic violence. It is hoped that through the facilitation of community education programs grounded in Jesus' words that "we love one another," the church can truly become *the very present help in the time of trouble* that God intended it to be.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray—
Proverbs 22:6, NRSV

When this writer was a little girl, she heard the stories about Papa—her mother’s father. She never got to meet Papa because he died when she was quite small. The stories were always disturbing to the little girl because they were not of a loving father (like her daddy)—quite the contrary. These stories were full of violence, abuse, fear and anger that had lain dormant for years.

This little girl’s mother’s face would twist in scorn as she talked about her father. Papa was mean and he drank a lot. He often was absent from the home for periods of time as he gambled what little money he made. When he would finally come home to the family’s little house in Vicksburg, Mississippi, no one was happy to see him. He was abusive to his wife—the mother of his 12 children (10 girls and two boys).

According to family lore, Papa would beat Mama (his wife) and then lay with her, so the children came one after the other. The children, the older ones in particular, observed this pattern repeatedly. However, Mama stayed in the little house, raised her children and went to church every Sunday. She quietly endured her husband’s abuse. To supplement the family’s income Mama worked as a cook and maid for white people. From what the little girl could glean from the stories, Mama simply suffered in silence.

One story concerned a beating that Papa had inflicted on Mama (the little girl's mother never told her why Papa beat Mama, just that he did). To stop the beating, one of the older girls took a vase and hit her father across the head with it. She quickly ran out of the house to the home of a neighbor. Papa picked himself up and ran out of the house, his wrath now turned toward his daughter. Fortunately, the neighbor stood at her door and refused him entry. He cursed and fumed and eventually went back home.

The irony of this story is that the daughter who fought her father to save her mother from a beating was the one who much later took Papa in to her own home. She allowed him to live out his last days in *her* house in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Story has it that Papa's last days were sad and lonely. It cannot be said with certainty, but it is this writer's belief that Papa was unhappy because Mama finally left him. She moved from Vicksburg to Chicago at the insistence of some of the older children who had migrated there (part of the great migration of Blacks from the south to Chicago which began after Reconstruction and grew exponentially from the early 1900's onward¹). Eventually, all but the second oldest sibling found their way to Chicago. There they found work, attended church and raised their families—away from Papa and the memories of violence in Vicksburg.

To make the circle complete, this writer's mother married a man completely opposite in personality from her father. He was a kind, quiet family man who did not like to argue. When arguments did occur, Mother was the more volatile of the two. It seemed to the child's mind of this writer that she did not want anyone to get the best of her. Only one time does the writer remember things getting physical between her two parents. It

¹ Encyclopedia of Chicago, Entries: African Americans,
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/27.html>, accessed May 14, 2010.

involved an incident in which mother threw an ashtray at her father. Watching this argument was quite upsetting to the little girl that was this writer. Still, for the most part, her parents lived together for 62 years in relative peace and raised their four children—three boys and one girl, the writer of this work.

Stories of this writer's grandfather were always an underlying subtext in the household. Mother never had anything good to say about her father. The writer believes that the bitterness left a deep and abiding hole in her mother's heart. In spite (or maybe because) of that bitterness, she would arise every Sunday morning, get herself dressed, and make sure all the children were in their Sunday clothes so that the family could go to church together. While Mother praised God, the writer is not sure whether Mother was ever truly healed of her childhood pain. The writer believes that her parents' strong commitment to the work of the church was the single mitigating factor that kept her family stable.

Growing Up in Church

The writer's father was a very special man with a very special job. Dad was a Pastor of a small family church—Greater King David Baptist Church located in Chicago's inner city. In time, the little girl grew to know the full extent of the responsibility for the lives and the souls of those God had entrusted to her dad's pastoral care. Dad took the job of pastoring the souls of the people entrusted to him seriously. As the little girl grew older, she realized that her father was not only a good preacher, but

also an exceptional Biblical scholar and an excellent Bible teacher. She was always proud to be his daughter. Her mother was the perfect first lady of the church.

Growing up as a pastor's kid (PK) meant that most family time together was spent in church. There were mid-week Bible Studies and prayer meeting on Wednesday nights, and choir rehearsal on Thursdays. The writer didn't mind the meetings so much in the winter, but she hated going to church on summer evenings when she wanted to be playing outside.

As a little girl, the writer would usually practice her piano lessons before these mid-week services, since the family did not have a piano in the house. Other activities included the once a month Missionary Society Meetings typically held on a Saturday at the home of one of the members. Finally, there was the Willing Worker's Circle that mother usually chaired. Since there was only one car in the family, and church was a family affair, everybody in the house had to go to *every* meeting there was.

The writer does not remember *when* she learned how to pray. The Lord's Prayer was taught to each child at a point very early in childhood. Both mother and dad insisted that the children said their prayers every night before going to bed and every morning upon arising.

Praying alone in her bedroom at night was one thing. Eventually, the writer had to learn to pray at church during prayer meetings. At first, the shy little girl in her was not very happy about doing that, but in time she learned that praying the Lord's Prayer in public was not so bad after all.

Church as Training for Life

Church actually became a training ground for life. There were always programs and services in which the little girl and her brothers had to participate. To this day, she remembers her first Easter speech:

“S” is for Savior who still lives today. Who makes intercession for us when we pray.

It seemed to the little girl that the pastor’s children were put on *every* program. As she grew, the writer’s confidence and self-esteem increased as her church family validated her abilities. One of those abilities turned out to be the gift of song. As a little girl, the writer loved to sing. In fact, everybody in her family could sing. Dad was a tenor and in his youth he had played guitar for tips while working in his aunt’s restaurant. Mother had a soprano voice and was a member of the Senior Choir. Brother Ted was a tenor and used to sing with some gospel groups in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.

It was Uncle Irvin (her dad’s brother) who seemed to summarize the musical talent in the family. With a booming baritone voice, he was a noted director of choirs on the south and west side of Chicago. As a little girl, this writer loved watching him direct. She enjoyed the anthems and hymns sung by the adults.

Today, the writer realizes that singing has always been an outlet for the voice in her soul. As a teenager, she discovered that through singing she could really stand out and shine in the church, so she sang for herself and for the Lord. Singing was her life and it became her ministry for nearly 30 years in her dad’s church, where she assumed she would always stay. God, however, had another plan. Many years later, the Lord began moving in her heart. In time, it became clear that she was being called into the preaching

and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ. “How can I do this without your help?” she asked the Lord. The Lord spoke to her heart and said, “If you will take care of my business, I will take care of yours.” And so she said, “YES!”

The Journey

The road to the preaching and teaching ministry would not be easy for this writer. In September 1998, Dad made his transition to be with the Lord. After his passing, things began to get difficult for the writer at her home church. Some of the members felt she was vying to be pastor, even though she said that was not her intent.

The writer began to discover that saying “Yes” to Jesus does not mean that one will live a life free of pain and suffering. For 10 years (between 1992 and 2002) she watched the slow decline and eventual deaths of her parents. Also during those years her oldest son was involved in an automobile accident that took the lives of three of his friends. Charged with reckless homicide, the son, with the family by his side, went through a three year experience with the legal system. The process took a dramatic toll on the family and ultimately sent the son spiraling into alcoholism.

This writer hoped for relief in the church she loved, but found none there. The new pastor was aloof from the family. Moreover, the pressure there grew more and more intense as opposition from a vocal minority increased against her desire to move into the preaching and teaching ministry. Much later, the writer was able to put a name to the pain she experienced during this time in her life—spiritual abuse. The lesson learned during this period in her life was that God often uses pain to implement God’s purpose for our lives.

Months after her son's accident occurred, the writer was on her way home from work when the Lord spoke to her heart. God gave her the name, mission and purpose of a specific ministry and that it would be called *Greater Faith*. God told her to feed the souls of people with the Word, and to feed the body both with food to bring nourishment for the flesh and with knowledge to develop, build and empower the mind. This, God told her, would be her kingdom building assignment. And so again she said, "Yes, Lord!"

Along the way, it became clear to the writer that she would have to leave her church home—the home she had grown up in, the home in which she knew every nook and cranny. However, the Lord said, "GO." He took the writer and her family to a place of rest where there was a new vision of faith and a Pastor after her Father's heart. There she was able to find rest for her heart, and rest for her soul for a season. Both the writer and her husband were soon ordained elders by their new pastor, and they were given responsibility as cell group leaders for the souls of many people.

They grew to love their new church family (New Vision of Faith Ministries), and so they stayed and prospered for three years. It was during this period that the Lord started speaking to both their hearts. They were convinced that God wanted them to move from their comfort zones, and that it was time to embark on another journey.

The writer said in her heart, "Where, Lord?" Although she liked to have all the *I*'s dotted and all the *T*'s crossed, the Lord only said, "Don't worry, I'm sending you to a new place. It will be a good place; a place where you will grow the ministry I have given you. It is a place where your family will prosper in ministry together. It will be a place where your sons will shine and your husband will realize the full extent of the power I have given him. This is your time; this is your season."

And so they left the comfort of the church they had grown to love. On October 1, 2006, Greater Faith Ministries International (GFMI) was launched as a church. It was a walk of faith and not of sight. Today, the church is feeding the souls of many as it reaches out to the homeless in shelters across the cities. GFMI is empowering minds and spirits through Biblical training and a variety of workshops focusing on health and wellness, as well as entrepreneurship education, as kingdom building strategies. There is much more to do to heal hearts, minds and bodies.

This writer's mother never knew how much the stories of her father affected the writer as she grew up. Today those stories are helping empower the writer to build bridges of hope within the church in order to support individuals impacted by fear, powerlessness and depression caused by the evil that is destroying families—the evil that is domestic violence.

What Is Ministry?

For this writer, ministry is a holistic activity encompassing the spiritual, economic and social reality and needs of individuals. Therefore, true ministry is *service and support to humanity*. Such a ministry should look at and respond to the human condition by providing realistic and substantive outreach targeted to the betterment of people—wherever they are, and at the point of their need. The pattern to follow was established when the church began over 2000 years ago. It is found in the Book of Acts.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as

owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4: 32-35, NRSV)

Based on the principles found in the New Testament book of Acts, this writer feels the call to harness the power of God working on the inside and pull together a lifetime of experience—inclusive of education, nearly 30 years in both corporate and entrepreneurial business and a lifetime of activity in church—to create a dynamic, faith-based organization built on principles of human justice and the liberation of the mind and soul.

As previously stated, a few years ago God directed this writer to a whole new level of proactivity in ministry—an entrepreneurial proclamation that led to the creation of a ministry of helps called Greater Faith Ministries International (GFMI). James and Hazel King serve together as pastors. The ministry's mission is to *feed the soul and feed the body* holistically as Jesus served his community during his earthly ministry. Consequently, GFMI's programmatic activities center on economic, social and spiritual development.

Greater Faith Ministries International is part of a larger fellowship of churches called New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFM) under the leadership of Apostle Kevin E. Dean. The Fellowship is designed as an umbrella under which ministries can more efficiently fulfill their God-given missions. It is also a resource to pastors as it allows peer to peer mentoring. In addition, the Fellowship sponsors a Bible Institute which brings theological training opportunities to the membership. The Fellowship is also involved in foreign missions. To date Apostle Dean and other leaders within the Fellowship (including Pastor James King and son Christopher King) have taken

missionary trips to places as diverse as Ghana, Honduras, and Haiti. Other such mission trips are planned for the future.

The Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood on Chicago's south side is currently home to GFMI. The median income of the area is less than \$30,000, and most residents of this community are economically depressed. It is a community where drug related crime, prostitution, homelessness and gang-banging are rampant. It is a community where many grandparents are raising their children's children. The reasons are varied, but most point to a breakdown in family caused by violence in the home, the large numbers of Black men in jail, drug use and economic devastation.

This neighborhood is not without hope, and it has a wonderful history which will be discussed later in this chapter. In its short history, GFMI has developed targeted programming to empower both church members and community residents. For example, GFMI has sponsored a variety of health and wellness workshops focusing on issues such as diabetes and hypertension, nutrition and exercise, and, most recently, a special family focus series focusing on sexual and domestic violence (to be discussed later in this paper). The church also has sponsored an ongoing series of entrepreneurship education classes so that people will know both how to take a job created by someone else and how to make a job for themselves and others. The ultimate goal in this regard is to build a faith-based chamber of commerce to support Christian community economic development and job creation.

Through worship services, educational workshops, and special classes the ministry works to create an environment that responds to 3 John 2 "Beloved, I pray that

all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.” (NRSV)

Moving forward, it is this writer’s belief that Greater Faith will ultimately become a model of authentic Christian community—God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

According to Dr. John M. Perkins, author and co-founder of the Christian Community

Development Association:

The gospel, rightly understood, is holistic. It responds to people as whole people; it doesn’t single out just spiritual or just physical needs and speak to those. Christian community development begins with people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God’s call to share the gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice. These groups of Christians start both churches and community development corporations, evangelism outreaches and tutoring programs, discipleship groups and housing programs, prayer groups and businesses.²

The gospel also heals as the church works to feed the soul and feed the body. For this writer, the belief in the concept of holistic ministry developed over a period of several years. It began in 1999 through involvement with the Helping Hands Ministry of the Greater King David Baptist Church located in Chicago. Helping Hands was an outreach ministry in which feeding the soul and feeding the body came together in perfect harmony.

On the first and third Sundays of each month, the Helping Hands opened the doors of the church’s Fellowship Hall for a community breakfast. A large percentage of the people who came by for breakfast were homeless men living on the streets or in

² John M. Perkins, ed. *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 21.

shelters. Quite a few were addicted to drugs and alcohol. Most had been victims of crime on the street; some were themselves victimizers. Many of the women were drug addicted prostitutes. Some admitted to having been sexually abused. As the minister in charge, the writer's responsibility was in part to provide a brief Bible lesson designed to actively engage those who came for breakfast. Much of this writer's time was spent in prayer and occasional pastoral counseling to the homeless and drug addicted folk who came for breakfast.

For the individuals involved in the ministry, the work was a reflection of Christ's true mission to the world—that ye love one another. It also evoked the Great Commission in that it targeted people outside of the church's four walls in a way that was meaningful and helpful.

Ministry as the Great Commission

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV)

This writer believes that the Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples prior to His ascension to heaven is the starting point for holistic evangelism. Christ-centered evangelism creates oneness with people, just as Jesus was of the people and always with the people. It is this writer's desire to develop a ministry that will be transformative in that it will be directed outside of the church's four walls in a manner wholly engaging and liberating to the lives of others. That is why the issue of sexual and domestic violence is so important as it touches the lives of so many people in the church.

The creation of a ministry of helps designed to empower and serve poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized individuals is, in part, this writer's reaction to the structural evil that is found in the exclusivism and myopia of the Church. Too often there is discomfort among members of the church when street people come in the doors for Sunday morning worship. Quite often, these people are not very clean and may even have an unpleasant odor. Clean, well-dressed church members typically shy away from them and seem offended by them. Many of the church ladies will make efforts to hold their purses close. This type of behavior (which is often unconscious) promotes a "we vs. they" atmosphere that is destructive to harmony within the body of Christ, and is certainly not welcoming to the stranger at the door.

That attitude is a kind of structural evil that has kept the church locked within four walls and away from proactive evangelism. It is an evil that enables a church to give only lip service to true Christian community—where the goal is to care for the broken spirits of both the people who attend church *and* the residents of the community in which the church resides.

A few years ago, this writer heard a sermon given by Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright who was, at that time, Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. In that sermon he said: "People come to church for hope and to be healed. They usually leave the same way they came in—hopeless and wounded." That is a scathing indictment of the Church.

While a student at Chicago Theological Seminary, this writer was struck by a comment made by Professor Ted Jennings who said: "The established church is insular and self-protective. It is desperately trying to hold on to traditions that are primarily

within its four walls. The church is not outward, but inward. As a result, the needs of many folk are not being met.”³ These two comments have had a major impact on this writer’s beliefs and attitudes about ministry and how ministry should happen.

Creating a New Paradigm in Ministry

The process of building a new paradigm in ministry, particularly in Chicago’s inner city, is difficult but not impossible. The Church of Jesus Christ is no stranger to the hopelessness and despair of city life. During the Apostle Paul’s lifetime, the torture and persecution of Christians were ordered by governmental leaders and common occurrences in big cities like Rome. Today, Christians in America may not have to face lions in the arena, but there are other insidious evils including crime, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual and domestic violence, as well as the frustration and desperation many people experience as a result of America’s current economic crisis.

In his book, *The Once and Future Church*, Loren Mead calls for the reinvention of the church. He says, “. . . God who called the church out into the apostolic world two thousand years ago is again calling the church out, this time into a secularized world where its mission and its life must be once again redefined.”⁴ Mead further believes that:

The dilemma of the church in this transitional time is that the shells of the old structures still surround us even though many of them no longer work. Some of the structures are institutions, some are roles, and some are mind-sets and expectations. At one moment they mediate grace to us and at the next they block and confuse us. Sometimes some of them actually support and nourish us, while

³ Dr. Theodore Jennings, Lecture delivered to Constructive II class, December 4, 2002.

⁴ Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1991), 43.

others get in the way of the new structures we need. Our task is no less than the reinvention of the church.⁵

Perhaps most important is that the pastoral leader of a congregation should be more than the person who dons the robe on Sunday morning and preaches the sermon. That person should have a heart for the people and be actively engaged in theological reflection and education, while providing oversight of the management and administration of the church's business and its programs. As the congregational leader, that person also should be praying that God grant a spirit of discernment in order that he/she can choose anointed, willing workers who will then go into the vineyard and work in such a way that their talents are maximized in a loving and nurturing environment.

Communities of people are dying physically, mentally and spiritually because the Church as an institution has failed to live up to the command that "we love one another" as Christ loved the Church and died for it.

In a recent conversation, a 42 year old woman spoke of years of sexual abuse perpetrated by her stepfather. Her mother worked outside the home and according to this woman, her mother was unaware of the abuse. Church was her refuge as a child. She loved singing in the choir and going to mid-week choir rehearsal. She also was happy when she was invited to the homes of one of the ladies in the church. It gave her an excuse to be away from home.

As a child she prayed to God that someone in the church would "see her face." No one picked up on her signals. No one asked the question, "Why don't you want to go home?" If someone had, perhaps she would have told them the truth of her life.

⁵ Ibid.

There are countless children living under similar circumstances today. Many are going unnoticed in the house of the Lord. In Matthew 25, Jesus talks of the judgment of nations. He tells those gathered around him:

Then the King will say those at his right hand, Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. . . . And the king will answer them, Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. (Matthew 25: 34-36, 40, NRSV)

Jesus also declares that there is a place of torment for those who claim to love Him, but who do not help to ameliorate the despair of others. The church must operate with a “least of these” mentality if it is to be relevant today. That means little girls like the one described cannot go unnoticed. The church must hear the silent cries for help.

Creating A Transformative Agenda

Change is uncomfortable. Like Mead, this writer strongly believes that the mission fields of the twenty first century exist right in the neighborhoods of the inner city. The Christian community—its institutions and organizations--should be the first line of defense and hope for people in need. Today, that calls for a recognition that the missionary frontier has changed.

A system designed to deliver resources far away must redesign itself to address a missionary frontier at home, one that literally surrounds the local congregation. . . . The leaders in this mission are the laity. The first line resource people and trainers are also laity – experienced, theologically solid laity.⁶

⁶ Mead, 59.

Mead further states: “Our hope rests ultimately on the power of God and his love for those in the city. A generation that has lost faith and hope that has given in to nihilism and despair should spur the church on to bring the gospel of hope to the inner city.”⁷

The inner city in Chicago is largely Black. This writer believes that the Black Church must take the lead in restoring its communities by first recognizing and then proactively responding to the nihilism and hopelessness faced by so many in our communities. James Evans describes God’s activity in the following way:

... the activity of God is an intrinsic, metaphysical quality of God... To work is to accomplish something in spite of resistance. To work is to enter into a formative relation with someone or something outside of oneself... One works in the concrete reality of history.”⁸

Greater Faith Ministries’ concrete reality exists in tough neighborhoods on Chicago’s south side. In this community there are many people who have little hope for themselves or for their children. Conversations with teenage boys in the “hood” reveal that most do not expect to live to age twenty one. Many have already been to the funerals of their peers whose lives were cut off through violence. Not long ago, this writer had to officiate at the funeral of a young man who was brutally shot down on the streets of Chicago.

What about the girls? Many do not expect to do much better than the boys. Most will say they do not want to have a baby before age twenty one, but quite a few will. Although these insights are anecdotal and unscientifically acquired, this writer has seen

⁷ Ibid., 57-58

⁸ James H. Evans, Jr., *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 75.

too many of the instances described above come to pass. Observations of their behaviors on the streets leads one to believe that cursing, pushing, and shoving are common occurrences among teens. In one respect, the behavior appears to the writer almost ritualistic in that it is an often-repeated pattern. Violent behavior has become too common among teens. Teen dating violence is an issue that must be examined by church leaders.

The church should not exist in a vacuum designed to support itself. If it is to survive, the church must be responsive to the social, economic and even the geo-political environment affecting its congregants and the neighborhood in which it resides. This is a tremendous challenge for any church (black or white). In spite of that criticism, historically the Black church also has been a galvanizing force within the community. From Nat Turner and Sojourner Truth to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, many of the better known African American social and political activists have their origin in the traditional Black church.

It is clear that the call to ministry demands responsiveness to the human conditions existing within the city's concrete reality in spite of any perceived or real resistance from outside forces. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell would not prevail (against the church). With that as the promise, one can move forward to create an agenda out of which the Great Commission can be manifested.

Our nation's cities are in a crisis. But in every crisis there is opportunity. I believe that this crisis is an opportunity for us, the church, to step forward and lead the way in restoring the inner city by bringing the physical presence of God into the city. I believe that the church has the opportunity to pioneer and model a way of life whereby our nation itself can experience a new birth.⁹

⁹John M. Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 18.

John Perkins wrote these words in his book, *Beyond Charity*. Chicago is a city in crisis. Drug trafficking and street crime are rampant. Schools are no longer safe places, and our children are in danger of annihilation.

Ministry in Context

For the purpose of this study, the writer's context was the New Vision of Faith Fellowship of seven churches covering a broad expanse of the south side of Chicago. Most are located in tough neighborhoods. Often called the "City of Neighborhoods," Chicago is divided into 77 community areas corresponding roughly to neighborhoods within the city. The churches in the Fellowship are all located on the south side of Chicago in tough neighborhoods—neighborhoods like Greater Grand Crossing which is approximately fifteen minutes from Downtown Chicago by way of the expressway.

Chicago's south side is peppered with single-family frame and brick homes, interspersed with two- and three-flat apartment buildings. Streets are congested with people of all types and abilities. According to census data, average income is around \$30,000. Surprisingly, the south side is also home to numerous small businesses such as beauty salons, barber shops, florists, cleaners and nail spas. For example, the street on which Greater Faith Ministries is located is home to former Chicago Bear Jimmy Jones' 50 Yard Line. It is one of the area's most famous night clubs. Army and Lou's Restaurant, also located on east 75th street, is known for outstanding soul food. The restaurant is frequented by Chicago's top politicians (including Mayor Daley) as well as

local residents of the community. That is part of the good news. The bad news is that as previously stated, crime is rampant.

A recent shooting in the neighborhood left five people dead including the young cousin of one of the members of GFMI. One neighborhood woman, who attends church irregularly, told of an underground of homeless women in the area. For purposes of this paper, this woman will be called V. Living on the fringes of society, V is homeless and often sleeps in abandoned houses. She is one of the “invisible” people spoken of in *Studying Congregations*, a book edited by Nancy Ammerman and others. The book describes people like V as “marginalized people and hidden forces ... (who) too easily escape our attention.”¹⁰

By her own admission, V has been physically and emotionally abused by men. She and her boyfriend lived together for some time in an abandoned house not far from the church. During one heated argument, V’s boyfriend beat her up. She left him and ended up in a shelter for awhile. Weeks later she was seen walking down the street with her batterer.

When V comes to church, she is often looking for a handout. She comes with intriguing stories of despair. She is never turned down or turned away. Still, because of the frequency of her requests, the ministry decided to buy several McDonald’s gift certificates for V and others who come to church hungry. GFMI church also invests in bus passes for those who need help with transportation—especially those who say they need a way to get to work.

¹⁰Nancy T. Ammerman, et al, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 42.

Gangs work the neighborhood, and the parking lot connected to the church was the site of drug dealing until the church came out and held prayer meetings in the lot. Chicago's south side is replete with incidences of drug trafficking, gang violence and other types of crime.

In spite of all the negatives, the community and its people remain vibrant and alive with possibility and hope. Clearly there is a lot of work for the church to do (and not simply on the south side). There are a number of little girls (and boys) with stories of abuse similar to the one described by the now forty two year old woman mentioned earlier in this chapter. There also are a number of women like V who live on the margins of society and believe that life cannot get any better than a handout. Finally, there are grown women who—like the writer's own mother—dress up and go to church every Sunday with their families. Unbeknownst to the pastors and teachers, these women are hiding emotional scars they received while growing up in homes where domestic violence and instability prevailed.

As far as this writer is concerned, the new paradigm in ministry involves *a least of these* attitude by the Church. We can no longer pretend that we do not see the pain. We have been called out to proactivity that will transform neighborhoods like those on the south side of Chicago and, yes, even the nation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will explore several of the relevant voices and writers on the subject of sexual and domestic violence. Targeted in particular are those writers who look at the subject from the standpoint of Christian institutions and their involvement (or lack thereof) as loving healers. The focus of this chapter will, in part, cover writers whose works broaden our understanding of the Bible as a tool for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care and counseling of those affected by sexual and domestic violence.

Tina Turner—A Story of Survival

*What's Love Got to do, Got to do with it?
What's Love, but a second hand emotion?
What's Love got to do, Got to do with it?
Who needs a heart, when a heart can be broken?*

These lyrics are from a song performed by recording artist Tina Turner. Turner has publicly admitted to being a battered wife. In 1993, a movie titled *What's Love Got to Do With It* was released. The movie details Turner's life before and after rising to stardom with her former husband, Ike Turner.

Tina, born Anna Mae Bullock, always had a special voice. Soon after arriving in St. Louis to live with the mother who had walked out on her as a child, the teenaged Anna Mae attracted the attention of Ike Turner. Ike was the leader of a pop music group and he immediately recognized Anna's talent. She became the band's singer; later she

became Ike's wife and mother to his children. Over time, Tina found herself the target of increasing violence from her unstable husband who could not accept that it was Tina's growing popularity, not his, that was making the band a success. Tina loved Ike and was determined not to leave her family in the same way her mother had left her. Ike was the authority figure in the family. For years he exercised absolute *power* and *control* over everything, most notably his wife and children. Ike used his power to control the money and the career of the band and especially its lead singer, his wife, Tina.

Finally, after many years of abuse, Tina got the courage to walk out and away from her life and musical career with Ike. This writer believes that the closing scenes of the movie should be empowering to every woman who has ever been in an abusive relationship. After leaving Ike, Tina's solo career rose higher and brighter than it had been with the band. Ike, however, never reached the star appeal or acclaim that he had with Tina as lead singer of his band. Ike later died of complications from drug abuse.

Why did Tina stay in an abusive relationship for years? In the book, *No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence*, authors Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark postulate the following:

Fear is the number one reason women do not leave abusive husbands and violent homes. A battered wife fears for her future, fears further violence and fears for the lives of her children. In fact, fear permeates her life and is often experienced as a paralyzing terror, ruling her day and destroying her sleep through nightmares. Fear makes women lie about the reality of abuse ("the bruise on my face is because I fell down the basement stairs"). And fear hampers women's ability to see the choices they might make to enhance their personal safety. So they spend what energy they have left trying to keep the secret rather than trying to escape.¹

¹ Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 34.

The writers also go on to describe how economic dependency, fear of change, as well as feelings of low self worth play a role in a woman's inability to leave abusive situations. This book is an excellent resource for those who are trying to get more than just a theoretical understanding of the dynamics behind domestic violence as well as its underlying causes. The authors use true stories of battered women and a broad range of statistical information to examine the gravity of the issue. Also significant to this writer's study is the book's in-depth look at scripture—how it has been used by the church to keep women in homes where abuse occurs, and how it also can be used to empower women to take godly authority over their lives and the lives of their children who also are at risk.

What's Love Got to do With It?

After years of abuse, Tina Turner finally took authority over her life. What was the moment when enough was finally enough? One might say that the defining moment was the last beating she sustained at the hand of Ike in a hotel room. The movie that told her story graphically depicted the physical violence she endured as she held down a career and raised a family. When enough finally became enough, Tina is seen in divorce court. She looked one last time at Ike and declared that she needed nothing from him. With Ike screaming insult after insult as she walked out of the courtroom, it was clear that Ike did not know how to deal with the newly empowered Tina.

Sexual and domestic violence impacts thousands of homes across America. It knows no racial, ethnic or socioeconomic boundaries. Rich or poor, black or white, abusive relationships abound. For years, Marie Fortune has been one of the leading

advocates for women and children who have been victimized by sexual and domestic violence. She also is a prolific writer on the subject. In her book, *Love Does No Harm*, she discusses the issue of *power* as it relates to common understanding of the underlying dynamics surrounding violent behaviors. Fortune describes *power* thusly:

Most simply, power is the capacity to act; this capacity requires resources. . . . Resources can be material or non-material: money and ownership of property is a resource but so is knowledge, self-confidence, and status or role. Power is essentially neutral: it is neither good nor bad in itself. Its moral quality is determined by the use to which we put it. . . . Within a patriarchal culture, for example, men have determined that they have more power than women and they act accordingly. The primary paradigm is that of dominance and submission which is projected onto relationships between men and women, that is, men being dominant and women being submissive.²

Throughout the movie (What's Love Got to Do With It?) Ike Turner was clearly portrayed as the one who held all the power. The movie allowed audiences to take an intimate look at the lives of these two very public people. Their family dysfunction was on display for the world to see. For many women, however, violence in the home is lived out behind the drawn curtains of their homes. Unless the violence escalates and moves from the house to the streets, very few others outside of the four walls of the home are privy to the physical bruises or the emotional pain and suffering of the victims on the inside of the house.

In another book, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited*, Marie Fortune details the erroneous belief systems that promote sexual and domestic violence. One erroneous belief is that the “romantic love ideal” requires a dominate-subordinate relationship

² Marie M. Fortune, *Love Does No Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 41- 42.

between two people.”³ Quoting from the book, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children*, by Florence Rush, Fortune describes the prerequisites for romantic interest between a man and a woman as follows: he must be taller, stronger, and make more money; she must be shorter, weaker, and make less money.⁴ This situation certainly describes the Turners.

In our society, women and children fulfill the subordinate status necessary to complement male dominance and thus are vulnerable targets for exploitation and abuse. Rush suggests that this dominant-subordinate pattern helps explain why men sexually abuse both women and children: “Since both women and children have been lumped together.” Any time there is an imbalance of power between individuals or groups of persons, there is the real potential for abuse of the less powerful by the more powerful. If the romantic love ideal in our society is posited on a dominant-subordinate relationship between persons, then it is no surprise that sexual activity and sexual violence have become confused.⁵

Fortune describes other erroneous beliefs that are worthy of note. They include the following:

Anything that employs the sexual organs must be primarily sexual in nature. In sexual violence (a man) uses his penis as a weapon to violate and assault another person. Just because he is using sexual organs in the process does not make his behavior “sexual” and therefore natural and acceptable.

The source of a man’s sexual response is external and somehow beyond his control. He is not responsible for what he does with his responses. In no way are women (or children) the cause or therefore the object, willing or unwilling of his sexual attention. Men do have the capability to be responsible for and with their sexual feelings and behaviors.

Men have the prerogative to impose their sexuality on others regardless of others’ wishes. The established norm in this society is that men have more power than women in all relationships, including sexual ones. The power

³ Marie M. Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 18.

⁴ Ibid, 19

⁵ Ibid.

of the male is what gives him the prerogative to take what he wants sexually.⁶

We see many of these myths lived out in the Turner's relationship as depicted on the big screen. Clearly Ike and Tina as entertainers lived very secular lives. We did not see or read much about church involvement. Had the marriage been founded on faith in Jesus Christ, and had the spouses lived out their faith by being actively involved in the church, would it have made a difference?

Authors James and Phyllis Alsdurf would likely say, "Probably not." In their revealing book, *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home*, the authors' state, "We Christians like to hope that wife abuse in our homes is not as prevalent as it is in society at large, but there is little data with which to make estimates."⁷ They further assert the following:

The violence of the batterer is violence on one's own behalf. It is violence designed to serve oneself and attain power over others. It is violence based on a lust for power, a lust which destroys. This lust is an indulgence of the "desires of the flesh and of the mind" according to Paul. It reveals a commitment to "the ways of the world . . . to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph.2: 2-3).

In his use of violence, the batterer is serving the cause of Satan in the world (see John 10:20). Violence is a means of asserting that one is powerful and is perceived by the abuser as a legitimate avenue for establishing power. Might which controls and appropriates solely for self fosters an appetite for even more power. Consequently, the pursuit of power actually enslaves the seeker to evil and can easily lead to moral, spiritual and physical death Violence is a sign of the batterer's choice to allow such corruption to take root and become evil.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 17-18

⁷ James Alsdurf & Phyllis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1989), 56-57.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

Tina Turner, like so many other women in the U.S. and around the world, was living in a war zone in her own home. Her enemy slept in the bed next to her and was the father of her children. The Chicago Police Department's Domestic Violence unit estimates that there are approximately 16,000 reported cases of domestic violence a month in the city. According to *A Safe Place*, Lake County (Illinois) Crisis Center: 7% of women (3.9 million) are physically abused by their partners, and 37% (20.7 million) are verbally or emotionally abused. In addition, every nine seconds a woman is physically abused by her husband.

Where is the church in all of this? In their book, the Alsdurfs take a strategic look at domestic violence specifically from the standpoint of the Christian home. The book is based on years of research and interviews with victims, abusers and pastors. Overall, the Alsdurfs found that the *good news* is that there were more reported instances of violence in non-religious households than in religious households. However, quoting from Lenore Walker's book, *The Battered Woman*, the Alsdurfs agree that it is a myth to think that religious beliefs prevent battering.

The majority of the women Walker interviewed grew up in what she calls "religious" homes, and she found that their beliefs and values primarily served to maintain the family unit. While most of the women in her study reported religious beliefs and some felt that their belief in a deity "helped them endure their suffering, offering comfort and solace," others abandoned their faith because it created conflict with the batterer or because of unsuccessfully seeking "help from a religious or spiritual leader."⁹

⁹ Ibid, 32.

The Bible and Violence in the Home

The Bible is a confusing text to bring into a discussion about sexual and domestic violence. This writer was taught to believe that the Word of God is inerrant and infallible; yet she holds many of its passages in tension.

On one hand, the Old Testament is replete with images of terrible acts of war, including large scale massacres of men, women and children. Key to this discussion, the Old Testament also contains stories of sexual and domestic violence against women. Those images include fathers having sexual intercourse with daughters (Lot and his two daughters), husbands pimping their wives (Abram and Sarai) and incest between brothers and sisters (Amnon and Tamar). Why are these images in the canon? What are we to learn about fairness, equity and justice from them? If the Old Testament were a made for television movie, this writer believes it would be one that would score high in Nielsen ratings.

Arthur Frederick Ide's *Battered and Bruised: All the Women of the Old Testament* is one book this writer found particularly helpful in understanding how the Old Testament has been used to frame Christian arguments that keep women in positions subordinated to men. In its introduction, Decherd Turner wrote that after reading Ide's book, Turner now believes that the Holy Bible is "Western Woman's greatest enemy."¹⁰

Through exhaustive research into ancient texts and manuscripts from Egypt, Assyria, India and elsewhere, Ide helps readers understand how thousands of years of

¹⁰ Arthur Frederick Ide, *Battered and Bruised: All the Women of the Old Testament* (Las Colinas, TX: Monument Press, 1993), p. 1.

oral histories and translations from scrolls and other documents helped create a canon that has been used to demonize, sexualize and marginalize women throughout the ages.

Another writer, Renita J. Weems in her book, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* also has taken a close look at the Old Testament as a means of identifying some of the biblical root causes of violence against women. She points out that:

In the prophetic descriptions, the husband repeatedly reminds his wife that he has fulfilled his side of the relationship—he has fed, clothed, and protected her (Hos. 2:8, Ezek. 16: 1-8). It is the wife's failures and indiscretions that are repeatedly elaborated upon: her false claims about her lover (Hos. 2:5, 12), her sexually extravagant and wanton behavior (Ezek. 16: 15-22), her flagrant failure to remain faithful to her husband (Jer. 3:3, 10; 4:30; Ezek. 16: 33-34). The husband threatens to punish and/or divorce his wife. She has repeatedly failed to live up to her side of the relationship (Jer. 13: 25-27; Hos. 2:8-13; Ezek. 16: 25-52; 23). The implication is clear: the wife deserves to be punished. The point of the marriage metaphor . . . is to justify the violence and punishment the subordinate endures and to exonerate the dominant partner from an appearance of being unjust.¹¹

Metaphors of power, dominance and aggression fill the pages of the Hebrew text.

In her book Weems discusses the rhetoric of metaphors and how they are used:

Each metaphor emphasized that the divine-human relationship operated within a frame of fixed rules of behavior and expectations, rules that in various ways perpetuated a system of relating that stressed hierarchy, domination, and retribution, rules that gave the dominant partner the right to penalize or retaliate against the subordinate should rules be broken, expectations be unmet, or warnings go unheeded. In this poetic world of fixed power relations, it is not surprising that God was always masculinized as the husband and Israel was always feminized as the wife.

¹¹ Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 19.

The power issues in the metaphor did not tolerate any diversion from these gender based roles.¹²

Clearly, for those Christians who use the Bible as a guide for daily living, the Hebrew texts can be used by some to justify the mistreatment of women and children. Metaphors relating Israel to a whorish wife and God to the betrayed husband lend credibility to the sexualized female who must be put in her place.

God then is not a harsh, cruel, vindictive husband who threatens and beats his wife simply because he has the power to do so. He is himself a victim, because he has been driven to extreme measures by a wife who has again and again dishonored him and has disregarded the norms governing marriage relations.¹³

In the New Testament, we are introduced to the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The primary message is one of love. In John 13:34, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another (KJV).” Further, John 3:16 tells us that “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (KJV).”

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about love (I Corinthians 13). In this comprehensive text, Paul told the church what love is and most importantly and relevant to this discussion, what love is not. The Apostle says that the “greatest gift is love” because love does no harm, as the title to Fortune’s book reiterates (*Love Does No Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us*). Unfortunately, that is not the way it goes in some intimate relationships. As with Ike and Tina, many relationships exist within the

¹² Ibid, 18.

¹³ Weems, 19.

pattern of dominant/submissive role-play with the male typically playing the dominant/aggressive part.

So how does the Christian get past unsettling scripture? The answer is he/she does not. For example, the household codes found in Colossians 3:18-4:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Titus 2:1-10; and 1 Peter 2:18-37 should all be reviewed within the specific context of the time of the writing 2000 years ago. Therefore, a critical reading of scripture can help bring understanding to certain issues—particularly those surrounding the sexual intimacy inherent in the marriage relationship.

Quoting from the writings of Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth, Marie Fortune uses the following passage to make an important point: “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have the authority over his own body, but the wife does” (I Corinthians 7:3-4, NRSV). She interprets this scripture to mean that both partners have the right to engage in sexual activity and to refuse sexual activity. She goes on to say that:

Paul’s instruction is also a reminder that both partners have the responsibility to attend to the sexual needs of the otherPaul is advocating attention to each other’s sexual needs except when the two partners agree to a period of abstinence for a particular reason, for example, during illness or a physical separation. Paul is most concerned about the possibility of a partner’s wandering eye if her/his sexual needs are not being met by her/his partner.¹⁴

¹⁴ Fortune, *Love Does No Harm*, 120.

Such an interpretation of that scripture does not seem one that is broadly asserted from most Christian pulpits. According to another Christian writer, Al Miles, “Clergy people have often not been helpful in dealing with the problem of domestic violence.”¹⁵

While many women affirm the overall value of their religious faith, few say that spiritual leaders have supported their struggle to leave an abusive situation. In fact, several women have told me that their pastors’ responses have stifled their healing process. Clergy say things like, “You have to work harder at being a better wife”; “Submit yourself to your husband. He is the head of you, as Christ is the head of the church”; “Pray so that you’ll be able to endure this pain. Remember, God will never give you more than you can bear”; “Divorce is a sin. You must do everything possible to keep your family together”; and “The wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does”—the same phrases perpetrators often use.¹⁶

Scriptural misinterpretation has justified spousal abuse in both Christian and non-Christian homes for as long as there has been a Bible. For today’s pastor, fear of getting involved in private matters and even the possibility of litigation keep many on the sidelines of this issue. Miles’ book is a challenge to every Christian leader and a must-read for the insights it provides.

Finally, Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark add to the understanding of how today’s Christian can help ease the sufferings of women and children living in violent homes.

Christians need to realize that while passion for family living and family values may feel timeless, how that is communicated and carried out in any place or any given generation will differ. We must be on our guard to ensure that nostalgia for the traditional family, however that is defined, does not prevent us from ministering to the real needs of our communities.

¹⁵Al Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Should Know* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

In fact, one person's nostalgia may be another person's nightmare: the white picket fence, the 2.5 kids, the dog and the family van are not universal nor particularly sacred. They are laden with cultural and class values, not necessarily godless in themselves, but not necessarily emanating from the heart of God. In other words, the image is not meaningful for everyone, nor does it produce warm fuzzies for all.¹⁷

¹⁷ Catherine Clark Kroeger & Nancy Nason-Clark, 44.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KINGDOM IMPERATIVE AS THE CHURCH CONFRONTS SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8 (KJV)

Growing up in the 1950's and 1960's, images of the ideal American family came from television series like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave It to Beaver*. These were comedies with story lines about two-parent white families where the husband worked outside of the home and the wife was a stay at home mom. Children were respectful and always did their homework. Dinner was on the table at 6 p.m., and families typically sat down and ate together. The harmless misadventures of the family members added humor to each episode, and all was perfect in their television world.

Today's television reality is much different. Thankfully, there are images of the Bill Cosby Show and his make believe family, the Huxtables, in rerun. The public can also look to the family of President Barack Obama in the White House as evidence that intelligent, hard-working, two-parent families exist in the African American community. Today's television view of family more often than not includes dysfunctional family images (black, white and all shades in between) like those portrayed on so-called reality television programs. In addition, news reports play up family dysfunction of all shapes and types.

There is nothing new about violence in families. As previously stated in this work, it is the contention of this writer that the church in general and the Black church in particular must develop tools for proactive engagement to support, to help, and to empower families dealing with sexual and domestic violence. Families are the foundation of the church. Therefore the church, if it is to build the kingdom of God on earth, must do so through the family foundation. The following sections will explore the historical, biblical and theological foundations upon which this writer views the church today as an institution informed by faith.

Historical Foundation

The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi decrees that a married woman who has the misfortune to get raped has to share the blame equally with her attacker. Regardless of how it occurred, the crime is labeled adultery and both participants are bound and thrown into the river. However, a husband is permitted to pull his wife from the water if he so desires, and the king, if he wishes, can let his male subject go free. (Hammurabi, 800's B.C.)¹

As the quote from the Code of Hammurabi indicates, there is nothing new about the sin of sexual and domestic violence. Today, sexual and domestic violence is a curse that pervades too many homes within the body of Christ. It is a curse that seeks to wean souls away from the loving embrace of Jesus Christ.

Readings within the Word of God foster a patriarchal view of Christianity that promotes the domination of male figures over the seemingly weaker voices of women and children. The Old Testament story of Tamar, King David's daughter, is one that vividly portrays how women could be devalued, turned into sexual objects, violently and

¹ For more details refer to the Avalon Project, The Code of Hammurabi (number 129). Translated by L.W. King. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp> Accessed May 16, 2010.

cruelly mistreated, and finally cast aside. Tamar's story involves incest, rape, murder, sibling rivalry, and political intrigue. The men who purport to love her turn away from her and plot their own interests, even as she is humiliated and degraded. Tamar is only a minor figure in the bigger drama going on around her. Her story will be discussed in more detail in the Biblical Foundation of this paper.

In the New Testament Gospels, Jesus' message to and his treatment of women and children present a far more egalitarian picture. For example, when children were brought to Jesus to be blessed, the disciples would have turned them away, but Jesus rebuffed his disciples. His love of children drew them near to him even as his disciples desired a respectful distance between the children and the rabbi.

Although Jesus' inner circle consisted entirely of men (12 disciples) there were many women who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry and were even considered disciples (e.g., Mary and Martha who were Lazarus's sisters). One story from the New Testament gospels (John 4) recounts how Jesus went out of his way to make contact with a Samaritan woman. This particular woman lived on the margins of society, and was ostracized by the community because of her lifestyle choices. Jesus' contact with the Samaritan woman changed her life and transformed the region. As a result of her witness, salvation came to her home town.

Jesus' example, as well as his message of love, points to the "way, the truth and the life" for the church. The first century church as described in the Book of Acts was a model for the egalitarian treatment of all people, as husband and wife teams like Priscilla and Aquila were equal partners in church leadership. Later, a wealthy woman named Lydia became a church leader and was a great friend to the Apostle Paul.

From its earliest beginnings as detailed in the Book of Acts, the church took care of its members—through exhortation of the Word of God, and by feeding, clothing, and caring for widows and orphans. The Bible tells us that these people held all things in common and worked for the good of all. Clearly, the early Christian model was one in which everyone worked together to build the body of Christ and advance the kingdom of God here on earth.

In many ways, the church in the Book of Acts provides a model for today's church. In his book, *The Spirit, the Church and the World: The Message of Acts*, John Stott writes that the church after Pentecost had several special characteristics. First, he described the Book of Acts church as a "learning church" in that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

. . . They sat at the apostles' feet, hungry to receive instruction, and they persevered in it. Moreover, the teaching authority of the apostles, to which they submitted, was authenticated by miracles: many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles (43). The two references to the apostles, in verse 42 (their teaching) and in verse 43 (their miracles), can hardly be an accident. Since the teaching of the apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the New Testament, contemporary devotion to the apostles' teaching will mean submission to the authority of the New Testament. A Spirit-filled church is a New Testament church, in the sense that it studies and submits to New Testament instruction. The Spirit of God leads the people to submit to the Word of God.²

Stott describes the Book of Acts church as a "loving church" in that they devoted themselves to the fellowship.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything

² John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 82.

they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4: 32-35, NRSV)

According to Stott, the New Testament Greek word *Koinonia* (from *kenos*, 'common') bears witness to the common life of the church in two senses. First, it represents a common sharing expressed in that they held property in common and shared a common life. Stott describes this sharing as a Trinitarian experience. "It is our common share in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."³

Was the early church a perfect community? Not at all. The next chapter in Acts (5) details the sad story of one husband and wife, Ananias and Sapphira. They concocted a scheme to defraud the apostles by holding back money they had promised to give after selling some property. The lie cost them their lives. Even so, the church's mission then and now should be to feed the soul and feed the body in love. The church must begin to use the keys of the kingdom to proclaim the gospel message of peace—promoting it first in family relationships in the homes and then outward to the rest of the world.

The Church Has Changed

It is unfortunate that centuries' worth of biblical interpretations led to a more patriarchal, male-led system of leadership in the church. For that reason, it is not surprising that issues that disproportionately affected women and children—like sexual

³ Ibid., 83.

and domestic violence (the primary focus of this writing)—were not a man’s problem and were therefore seen as necessary evils for others to endure.

In an article appearing in *Christian Century*, October 28, 1987, Lois Gehr Livezey quotes John Calvin who wrote the following words to a battered woman seeking his counsel:

We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly (sic) and roughly treated by their husbands, because of the roughness and cruelty of the tyranny and captivity which is their lot. We do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband, except by force of necessity and we do not understand this force to be operative when a husband behaves roughly and uses threats to his wife, nor even when he beats her, but when there is imminent peril to her life. . . . [W]e . . . exhort her to bear with patience the cross which God has seen to place upon her and meanwhile not to deviate from the duty which she has before God to please her husband, but to be faithful whatever happens.⁴

Clearly, Calvin felt that violence in the home was something that this woman simply had to endure. It was her lot in life—the cards she was dealt. For Calvin, only the “clear and present danger of death legitimates the separation of batterer and battered and Calvin does not seem to regard the ever-present life-threatening potential of such violence very seriously.”⁵

How many pastors in the history of the church have used the Word of God as justification to send a woman back to a home where violence prevailed? More than

⁴ “Letter From Calvin to an Unknown Woman,” June 4, 1559, Calvini Opera, XVII, col. 539, in P.E. Hughes, editor, *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 344-345.

⁵ Lois Gehr Livezey, “Sexual and Family Violence: A Growing Issue for the Churches,” from an article appearing in the *Christian Century*, October 28, 1987, p. 938. Copyright by the Christian Century Foundation. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted and Winnie Brock. Retrieved November 26, 2008.

likely, too many to count. Some pastors have lived to regret that choice. When women turn to their religious communities for help, advice, and support they are too often turned away. Sometimes they are met with either disbelief (particularly if the husband is known in the community) or sanguine expressions of faith. As a result, these women often leave church confused and hopeless. They are then left to figure out their circumstances alone.

Calling it the “situation” of faith, Daniel Migliore describes the challenge of faith and living in the real world where sin is active:

Questions arise at the edge of what we can know and what we can do as human beings. They thrust themselves on us with special force in times and situations of crisis such as sickness, suffering, guilt, injustice, personal or social upheaval, and death . . . they [Christians] may be more perplexed than others because they have to relate their faith to what is happening in their lives and in the world.⁶

African Americans and Christianity

The Black Church is and has been an extremely powerful institution in the lives of Black people. During slavery, God became the One on whom hope was based and who would ultimately liberate slaves from the oppression under which they lived.

Through hearing and reading the story of the Jews, blacks were enabled to perceive the activity of God in their own community. It is at this point that black history becomes important for study of the Bible. Blacks can neither properly understand nor appreciate the story found in the Bible without knowledge and understanding of black history.

The stories found in the Bible tell us how to look at the black story, what questions to raise, and even when we have found some of the answers. . . . The liberating story found in the Bible, of necessity,

⁶ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 30.

contradicts the story of slavery. The interpretative value of the story provides one of the keys for understanding the African American story.⁷

In the book, *God of the Oppressed*, liberation theologian James Cone asserts the following:

The vision of the future and of Jesus as the Coming Lord is the central theme of black religion. This theme is expressed with the idea of heaven, a concept that has been grossly misunderstood in black religion. For many people the idea of heaven, in the songs and sermons of black people, is proof of Marx's contention that religion is the opiate of the people. Unfortunately, many uninformed young blacks, hearing his Marxian analysis in college, have accepted this criticism as true without probing deeper into the thought forms of black people. To be sure, white missionaries and preachers used Jesus Christ and heaven to make black slaves obedient and docile. But in reality, the opposite happened more often than not. For many black slaves, Jesus became the decisive Other in their lives who provided for them a knowledge of themselves, not derived from the value system of slave masters.⁸

Cone goes on to say that the only way slaves could recognize their value and their humanity was through their belief in Christ their savior. Jesus was their liberator who would, like Moses, set them free from their oppressors.

Only because they knew that Christ was present with them and that his presence included the divine promise to come and to take them to the "New Jerusalem." Heaven, therefore, in black religion was inseparably connected with Jesus' promise to liberate the oppressed from slavery. It was black people's vision of a new identity for themselves which was in sharp contradiction to their present status as slaves. This vision of Jesus as the Coming One who will take them back to heaven held black people

⁷ Thomas Hoyt, Jr., "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, Cain Hope Felder, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 30

⁸ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 119-120.

together mentally as they struggled physically to make real the future in their present.⁹

As previously stated, this writer's context is urban, inner city and primarily African American. Writers like Cone speak to the angst of the community this writer serves, especially its blackness. As descendants of slaves, Black people still carry within them the deep psychological imprint of slavery. It shows in the way we treat ourselves and in the way we treat others in our community.

Violence is a dominant theme in the portrait of African American life in the United States. For nearly four centuries, African Americans have lived in a culture with prominent strands of violence woven throughout the fabric of life. Violence takes many shapes and has a myriad of nuance, but its core identity is that of aggressive, combative, and destructive behavior.

African American experiences of violence in the United States are rooted in the oppressiveness of chattel slavery. Chattel slavery did violence to enslaved people both physically and psychologically. . . . The abusive patriarchy of the antebellum period meant that women and girls faced the added brutality of sexual exploitation. . . . African American females additionally faced expressions of sexual exploitation at the hands of some African American males who were socialized to view females as objects of violent sexual aggression.¹⁰

James Cone proposes (controversially) that the suffering Christ must, of necessity, be Black. He details the reasons (beginning with the Jewishness of Jesus) in his book. However, he compares white theologians and their perception of Christ to the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day.

⁹Ibid., 120.

¹⁰ David Emmanuel Goatley, "Preaching in a Violent Situation," in *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John S. McClure and Nancy J. Ramsay, eds. (Cleveland, United Church Press, 1998), 85.

White theologians' attitude toward black people in particular and the oppressed generally is hardly different from that of oppressors in any society. It is particularly similar to the religious leaders' attitude toward Jesus in first-century Palestine when he freely associated with the poor and outcasts and declared that the Kingdom of God is for those called "sinners" and not for priest and theologians or any of the self-designed righteous people.¹¹

In contrast to Cone are the voices of womanist theologians. While African American liberationist theologians view and critique the Bible from the standpoint of freedom from racial oppression, the African American womanist theologian views biblical hermeneutical critique from the standpoint of lives lived by Black women.

. . . . the hermeneutical approach that forms womanist interpretation is foremost contextual. It begins with the social location of black women. It decisively addresses a world comprised of multiple forms of oppression that work simultaneously to marginalize them as well as others.¹²

The "multiple forms of oppression" African American women face can be particularly onerous on those living in homes where violence prevails. For example, some women may find themselves encouraged to stay in abusive situations for greater societal reasons. The claim that society wants to keep the Black man down is given some validity when one considers that ten percent of Black men are incarcerated, or in low paying jobs, or under-educated. None of these are good reasons for abuse.

Putting the needs of others first has been documented as one of the perceived roles of African American women Many African American women hesitate to report domestic violence for fear of the discrimination and injustice that African American men often experience

¹¹ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 123.

¹² Michael Joseph Brown, *Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004), 91.

in the criminal justice system Being acutely aware of police brutality and other forms of injustice, the woman forgoes her needs for fear of the criminal justice system. This increases her chances of physical injury and mental anguish. She is almost expected to sustain the abuse to protect the family, maintain the relationship, and spare the larger community of embarrassment, all the while denying her mental health needs and physical safety. Maintaining racial loyalty can have devastating physical and mental health effects. Yet, societal forces can also greatly affect African American women who experience domestic violence.¹³

The other side of this argument is the myth of the militantly strong Black woman. She is the woman who takes “no stuff” from anyone. From slavery to the present, Black women in this society have led households, businesses, and even the church (mostly behind the scenes). These are all positive traits and what Jacqueline Grant would call *womanist* characteristics.

“A womanist then is a strong Black woman who has sometimes been mislabeled as a domineering, castrating matriarch. A womanist is one who has developed survival strategies in spite of the oppression of her race and sex in order to save her family and her people” (Grant 1989, 205).¹⁴

In her contribution to the book, *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, Kathleen J. Greider paints a positive picture of the need for militancy as she quotes from feminist liberation theologian Dorothee Soelle:

For people and communities of faith, militancy is sometimes necessary not only as an expression of psychological self-esteem but of spiritual “faith-esteem,” making persons more able to stand by their prayerfully considered beliefs If faith is to be responsive to suffering and not

¹³ Tricia B. Bent-Goodley, “Perceptions of Domestic Violence; A Dialogue With African American Women, Health and Social Work” – November 1, 2004, <http://media-server.amazon.com/exec/drm/amzproxy.cgi/Mjk2IjqRwp28FSkM4fu7CTY> (purchased online 11/29/08).

¹⁴ Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 205.

become self-satisfied . . . faith sometimes needs to be militant like the militancy of Jesus' faith that took the form of a "degree of steadfastness".¹⁵

The Relevant Church

Because of the importance the Black church plays in the lives of many within the community, it is time for the church to raise its voice in outcry against the humiliation, psychological distress and dis-ease that sexual and domestic violence brings to the homes of many congregants.

According to David Emmanuel Goatley, "Preaching that is relevant to African American life must be prepared to speak coherently, responsibly and with integrity in the harsh and hostile realities of violent situations."¹⁶ Partnerships with shelters, social service agencies and a variety of community based organizations will be helpful in bringing understanding and insight to both leaders and lay members within the African American church. Workshops and seminars will help draw attention and focus to this persistent problem.

Perhaps then the church will become a place of refuge, as well as a place where suffering people can find resources that address, support, and help ameliorate the pain of living under the cruel hardship that is domestic violence. The church must "out" the issue! The church can no longer turn its backs on this concern as it affects untold numbers of families.

The Black Church and others within Black religious traditions give allegiance to biblical faith and witness primarily because their own

¹⁵ D. Soelle, *Choosing Life*, Translated by Margaret Kohl, (Philadelphia, PA, 1981), 18.

¹⁶ Goatley, 87.

experiences seem to be depicted in the Bible. Many of the biblical stories reflect the existential reality of the “Black story” in an environment typically hostile to the interests of Blacks attaining their full sense of human potential. Blacks have become all too familiar with oppression by the socioeconomic forces of political powers—foreign and domestic—arrayed against them. In the Bible they have found ancient symbols of their predicament: the saga of the Egyptian bondage, the devastation of Assyrian invasions, the deportation into Babylonian captivity, and the bedevilment by principalities and powers of the present age. Blacks have consequently developed an “experiential sympathy” with much of the Bible, which in turn receives their reverent attention as quite literally the revealed Word of God.

Mindful of what has been the relationship between the Bible and the Black religious experience, we are at the juncture in history where new questions must be posed.¹⁷

As priestly shepherds, pastors are to represent the heart of God, for the heart of God is breaking as the Lord of heaven watches so many suffer at the hands of those who purport to love them, along with the religious communities that should be standing in solidarity and faithfully supporting them. In her book, *Survival and Liberation*, Carroll A. Watkins Ali writes about how Christianity was used in America to keep African slaves under control.

Consistent with the way Western Christianity was often used as a means of control over America’s slaves and indigenous people, in more recent times the emphasis of traditional theological concepts tends to ignore the issues of the oppressed populations of the world. Is it any wonder, then, that traditional pastoral theology, which has been influenced by traditional Western theology, also seems to ignore the more critical issues of oppressed people?¹⁸

¹⁷ Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class and Family* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 6.

¹⁸ Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation, Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 40.

The church, which represents the body of Christ, has too often been a co-respondent to oppression—most specifically, where the issue of domestic violence is concerned. The foundation of the church is love. Jesus told his disciples in John 13:34, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (NRSV) The word “love” is translated from the New Testament Greek word, *agape*. This is the all-encompassing love of God for the world. John 3:16 tells us that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (NRSV)

John’s gospel focuses on the deity of Christ. It supports the belief that eternal life does not wait until the end of time, but is given now to all those who believe. It is within this one critical verse that the entire gospel is encapsulated. God’s pattern for love is giving, not taking. It is sacrificial, not selfish. Loving someone dearly requires that one give his/her all for another. As a result of that sacrifice, humanity now has a right to a new life in Jesus and a new familial relationship with God. Christians are to be ambassadors of God’s love here on earth working to spread the gospel message—first in our homes, then abroad.

Unfortunately, that has not been done to the degree it should. The gospel message has been used in too many instances to keep groups of folk alienated, marginalized, and without hope. This has been especially true for countless women and children who have suffered physical and emotional abuse in their own homes. Too often the Bible is used as justification for maltreatment. Wives must submit to the biblical authority of the husband/father in the home. Like the woman seeking help from John Calvin more than

400 years ago, women through the ages have had to put up with unbearable mistreatment in the name of Christianity.

Christian wives, girlfriends, sisters, and mothers struggle with submission to men. Even the most godly men can be difficult to submit to. Women simply do not want to be ruled by men! . . . Although not easy, God provides help through His perfect plan for marriage if it is carried out by both the husband and the wife in utmost faithfulness. However, when one partner is not carrying out God's plan in utmost faithfulness a battleground for spiritual warfare is set.¹⁹

In his epistle to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul warned the church that it does not fight against flesh and blood, but powers and forces of the invisible demonic world (Ephesians 6: 10). That is hard to believe when one comes up against a batterer's flesh and blood fist.

In her book, *Family Abuse and the Bible*, Aimee Cassiday-Shaw postulates that uncontrolled anger or anger that is held within for a long time is a potential open door to demonic possession. She also adds that the door to the demonic is also opened through the use of chemical substances.

A study published by the National Institute of Justice . . . revealed that 92 percent of abusers used drugs or alcohol the same day that they assaulted a family member. Indeed, substance abuse and domestic violence tend to go hand in hand. Although the Bible does not blatantly reveal anything about the use of drugs, God certainly speaks against drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18) . . . Further study in God's word reveals that the use of drugs is the same as "witchcraft." . . . (The) original language of the Bible shows us that the Greek word for "witchcraft" is *pharmakeia* . . . The actual Greek use of that word is also defined as "the use of the administering of drugs"

¹⁹ Aimee K. Cassiday-Shaw, *Family Abuse and the Bible: The Scriptural Perspective* (New York, NY: The Haworth Press, An Imprint of the Haworth Press, Inc., 2002), 39.

and “poisoning.” Hence, our English words “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals” are from the Greek root.²⁰

Drug and alcohol abuse is rampant in African American families. It has been a panacea for many who find it hard to deal with racism, sexism, poor education, lack of employment opportunities, and substandard housing. For numbers of African Americans, the church has offered another kind of escape—“a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.” The church has been a mainstay of community life since before Reconstruction. Black people held on to the image of a God who delivered the people of Israel from their Egyptian oppressors. They often expressed their faith in God through song. Negro Spirituals like *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* were an expression of a widely held belief among Blacks that things would be better for them in the *Sweet Bye and Bye*.

Twentieth century theologian Jurgen Moltmann calls this focus on the future the theology of hope. Essentially, Moltmann postulates that God’s promise to act in the future is more important than the fact that He has acted in the past.

Today’s church must challenge century’s worth of silence and stand—putting on the whole armor of God—to defend, protect, and bring healing to victims of abuse like the writer’s mother who grew up and grew old with haunting memories of abuse. In the book, *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, M. Shawn Copeland writes:

Theology mediates between Christian communities of witness and worship and the cultures in which they exist. If theology is to assist pastoral practice in dealing with violence, it has to come to terms with violence in the measure that it has been affecting and wounding our culture, wounding the imagination. At the same time, theology has also to

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

come to terms with the biased ways in which women have been and are perceived in church and society.²¹

Because families are the foundation of the church, the church, if it is to build the kingdom of God on earth, must do so one family at a time.

Biblical Foundation

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

This dissertation is grounded on the above referenced scripture. Faith has been the guiding principle throughout the writer's life and work. It is the basis on which Greater Faith Ministries International—the ministry which God birthed in her—is founded.

Although the author of the letter to the Hebrews is not identified, some theologians suggest it might have been the Apostle Paul because of the style of the writing. The book of Hebrews is full of practical spiritual help. This epistle was written to Hebrew Christians to develop their spiritual understanding, to encourage them and to strengthen them. Many of these first century Christians were struggling with their faith—much like Christians today.

Faith Defined

Faith is the word most commonly used to describe one's relationship with God. The New Testament Greek word for faith is *pistis*—which, when translated, means firm

²¹ M. Shawn Copeland, "The Wounds of Jesus, The Wounds of My People," in *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John S. McClure, Nancy J. Ramsay, eds. (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), 35.

persuasion according to *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*.²² The King James Version of Hebrews 11:1 begins with a description of faith as substance. Some recent versions use the word "assurance" (*hypostasis* in the New Testament Greek). Biblical scholar Thomas G. Long posits the following interpretation:

. . . [F]aith as "the assurance of things hoped for" is not just inward confidence, it is also an outward actuality. The word translated "assurance" in this verse, *hypostasis*, was used . . . to describe how the Son is the expression of God's *hypostasis*, God's "very being" (1:3). In other words, faith is the "very being" of God's promises. It is more than the inner confidence that the powers of the world that press down and destroy human life will eventually yield and that God's promises will be fulfilled someday; it is the reality of those promises moving as an advance force and operating behind enemy lines.²³

Today's economic turmoil, business closings, job losses, and the geo-political environment in which we live are all sources of chaos and uncertainty for both Christians and non Christians alike. Thomas Long suggests that faith enables believers to see a reality that does not yet exist in the natural world, but one that God has undoubtedly promised for a future revelation which will be seen. As a result, Christians can rejoice in the promise of blessings yet to come.

With these words in view, the opening verse might be translated to mean that faith is the very foundation of things hoped for. The foundation of faith is belief in God. When a believer has faith, it is God's way of giving that person confident assurance that

²² W.E. Vine, Merrill, F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Diction of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 222.

²³ Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 113.

what is promised will be experienced. In the book entitled *What is Faith*, Eugene Joly writes:

To have faith in someone is to rely upon him and to recognize what he tells us as true in virtue of the confidence which we have in him We do not speak of faith unless the reality which we are to reach surpasses our own powers of discovery, unless we are obliged to rely on the witness of some competent person. Christian faith is of this kindTo have faith is to have confidence in God's witnesses, and above all to have confidence in Jesus Christ, and so to stake one's life on Jesus Christ.²⁴

In discussing what faith is, Joly goes on to describe what faith is not. Specifically, he notes that faith is not a "feeling," but an act of intelligence. Another writer, V. Bailey Gillespie, calls faith a gift of God unto salvation. This free gift produces within the Christian the product of good works.

By accepting faith from God we participate in the process leading to our final salvation. This process is not righteousness by works in any sense, because the Christian realizes that it is God who does the saving. Nonetheless, there is a sense that we would not even want to come to God unless God had given us that interest as a gift. We do not "work" to get faith. In this sense faith is a gift from God to be used in establishing our relationship with him.²⁵

Continuing the dissection of Hebrews 11:1, the author of the epistle also describes faith as the evidence of things that are unseen. *Evidence* is a word often used in reference to legal matters. Evidence refers to a sign or proof of the existence or truth of something.

²⁴ Eugene Joly, *What is Faith* (New York: Hawthorn Books , 1958), 15-16.

²⁵ V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Experience of Faith* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988), 29.

The second half of the definition speaks of faith as “conviction,” using the language of the law-court where facts are attested, proved, or disproved. Faith attests the existence of final realities that are true, not despite being unseen, but precisely because they are “things not seen.” The author is not echoing distinctions in hellenistic metaphysics Like Paul (cf. Rom 8:24-25; 2 Cor 4:18), he relates the unseen to God’s promises that await future fulfillment (11:7).²⁶

Faith, for this writer, is a solid belief system based on an inward conviction or truth that what God promises, God performs. Philippians 1:6 says: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (KJV)

Faith seeks a greater understanding of God. Faith also seeks to be in relationship with God even as God is the source of the Christian’s faith. Christians must know in whom and in what they believe, and that is why the Apostle Paul’s admonition to his protégé, Timothy, is important. Timothy was told to study in order to show himself approved unto God so that he would be able to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15, KJV). The Word of God undergirds the Christian’s belief system. It is this writer’s contention that God’s Word brings life, truth, illumination, knowledge, and conviction to the hearts of believers.

Faith points us to Christ because He alone is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14: 6, KJV). It is not just simple trust, or even blind trust, faith is fervent belief based on proven evidence of those things wrought in our lives that only God could have performed. God is the One who is leading the way and ordering our steps. “Hebrews

²⁶ Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 156.

11:6a ('Without faith it is impossible to please him') is the biblical text most frequently quoted to prove the necessity of faith for salvation. . .²⁷

In the book, *Dynamics of Faith*, Paul Tillich in part describes the source of faith as *ultimate concern*. "There is no faith without a content toward which it is directed. There is always something meant in the act of faith."²⁸

In terms like ultimate, unconditional, infinite, absolute, the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is overcome. The ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same. This is symbolically expressed by the mystics when they say that their knowledge of God is the knowledge God has of himself; and it is expressed by Paul when he says (I Corinthians 13) that he will know as he is known, namely, by God. God never can be object without being at the same time subject. Even a successful prayer is, according to Paul (Romans 8), not possible without God as Spirit praying within us.²⁹

Without an understanding that is supported by God's word, there cannot be true faith and believers will be bounced about by every wind of doctrine that's currently out there in the world. God is the rock, the foundation of our belief and the point of our faith. God's word empowers Christians and allows them to grow in relationship with God. Even as this writer submits to the authority of scripture, she believes that the church must work harder to promote its overriding message of peace, love and justice. The word of God points us to Christ who came from heaven to bring salvation to the world.

²⁷ Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17.

²⁸ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 10.

²⁹ Ibid, 11.

In both the Old and New Testaments the concept of faith is complex. It includes elements such as personal trust, assent to divinely revealed truth, fidelity, and obedience.

In the Old Testament faith is depicted as the appropriate response to God's faithfulness to his covenant promises. . . . In the New Testament the cognitive element is more pronounced, partly for the reason that the hopes of Israel are held to have been surpassingly fulfilled in Christ.³⁰

Faith is not simple obedience to a set of rules or statements. For victims of domestic violence, faith in a God of love is often held in tension to the abusive environment in which they live. According to Thomas Long, "What the naked eye can see, of course, is a world of suffering and setback, violence and hardship. Given the harsh realities of the world, faith is the ability to see with the inner eye, to see what cannot be seen with the natural eye."³¹

Faith then involves the courage to believe beyond that which is seen or experienced. Paul Tillich calls faith a finite act.

. . . [I]t is an act in which the infinite participates beyond the limitations of a finite act. Faith is certain in so far as it is an experience of the holy. But faith is uncertain in so far as the infinite to which it is related is received by a finite being. This element of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. And the element in faith which accepts this is courage. Faith includes an element of immediate awareness which gives certainty and an element of uncertainty, faith shows most visibly its dynamic character.³²

The Bible tells us that God is a spirit and those who worship him must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4: 24, KJV). Worship is the method by which humanity expresses

³⁰ Dulles, 17.

³¹ Long, 114.

³² Tillich, 16.

itself to God and through which God reaches out in relationship to humanity. Faith in God, who is transcendent and who is, according to Paul Tillich, our ultimate concern, has the power to bring the community of believers together to heal, to help, to deliver, to save, to transform, and to make alive what was dead. That would include our families, our neighborhoods, our communities, our churches, and our governments.

Faith is transformative. In fact, reformation of the church began as a result of Martin Luther's reading of the book of Romans and taking to heart the phrase "the just shall live by faith." Luther's *95 Theses* were nailed to the door of the church in 1517 and the church has never been the same.

The date October 31, 1517, is regarded as the birthday of the Protestant Reformation but it did not in the least mean anything of that kind to him. It was simply his personal protest made in the customary manner against something which he felt was working frightful injury.³³

Martin Luther taught that salvation is not from good works, but a free gift of God, received only by grace through faith in Jesus as redeemer from sin. His theology challenged the authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge.

Martin Luther was called to live out his faith through this one act of courage. Luther challenged what Walter Wink might call the systemic evil of Indulgences within the Catholic (universal) church of his day. Throughout history, God has used ordinary people who lived out their faith through acts that brought change, transformation and empowerment to others—particularly those on the margins. More than four hundred

³³ Stewart Means, *Faith: An Historical Study* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), 253.

years after Martin Luther, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was likewise an agent of change. The systemic evil he and others challenged was segregation in the United States. In the closing days of his life, King spoke prophetically that even though he might not see his dream realized, he fully believed that change was on the way. Another modern day faith hero is Samuel DeWitt Proctor. In his book, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, he described the events of his life as a journey of faith. Proctor's legacy is seen in the annual conference that bears his name (Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.) The conference focuses on issues relating to supporting churches, empowering leaders, and transforming communities. In his book, *The Experience of Faith*, V. Bailey Gillespie notes the following:

. . . Christian faith is a lived reality with a belief conviction, a trusting relationship, and a love-filled life. All of us who see the importance of religious experience as it is manifested in the faith response could work to enhance and enrich the learning of God's people in a significant way. Until all of us in the church understand the faith nurturing process that assists us in experiencing God, until all of us have actually sensed the reality of "calling out" and "calling to" as seen in faith commitment, and until all of us are nurtured to actually live out in the life the radical calling of religion, nothing, insight into truth, doctrinal clarity, magazines, or study guides will do very much for us.³⁴

Walking by Faith

The Apostle Paul told the church at Corinth that "We walk by faith, not by sight" (I I Cor. 5: 7, KJV). Hebrews 11 outlines a number of individuals who exemplify those who did just that. Many writers have called them heroes of faith. This designation is given because these men and women trusted God even though they could not see in the

³⁴ Gillespie, 56-57.

natural world the expected outcome. Their view was obscured by the three dimensional realities of their existence. But God, who is spirit, sees beyond this mortal plain and into dimensions that humans will never fathom.

These heroes exemplify the believer's walk of faith as they held fast to the profession of their faith without wavering knowing that God, who is faithful, is able and willing to keep promises. The Word of God was engrafted on their hearts and they followed the leading of the Lord. Many, like Abraham, did not live to see the fruition of the promise. However, they trusted God for the unseen and unfulfilled promise. They won God's approval because of their faith.

According to Thomas Long, the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ establishes a great unbroken cord of faith that stretches from the beginning of human history all the way into the heavenly sanctuary in the City of God, where the cord has been securely fastened and anchored by Jesus.³⁵ This great cord includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David Samuel, the prophets and a host of others. These Old Testament men and women are examples of those who walked by faith and not by sight.

None of the people listed in this faith line-up lived perfect lives. For example, Rahab is intentionally called "the harlot" in this scripture just as she was in the book of Joshua. For this writer, her story dramatically shows how God works in mysterious ways. First, Rahab did not know the God of Israel—this makes her unusual as a faith heroine. Second, as a woman of ill-repute, Rahab had no real power except her ability to persuade the Israelite spies that she could be of help to them in their plan to conquer the city of

³⁵ Long, 126.

Jericho. Her goal was simple—to save herself and her family. Ultimately, she and her household were saved by God’s grace and mercy. She was, in effect, twice saved—once from destruction when the army of Israel destroyed the city, and finally from eternal damnation as she recognized that the God of Israel is the “*God of heaven above and in the earth beneath*” (Josh. 2:11, KJV). These simple words were her testimony of faith. As a result, God granted her a great honor—inclusion in the lineage of Jesus.

In his book, *Faith On Earth*, H. Richard Niebuhr says that believing is itself a kind of seeing.

Only faith can “see” what remains hidden to unbelief. “The righteousness of God has been *manifested* . . . through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe,” writes Paul (Rom. 3: 21,22; emphasis added). It is not faith but unbelief that is blind; “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”. . . . Faith is the seeing and knowing of that which “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived” (I Cor. 2:9), but which is nevertheless presented in immediacy.³⁶

“Faith as an outward reality prays boldly for those who mourn, serves tenderly those who weep, works tirelessly to ease the pain of those who are wounded. Inwardly, faith moves hearts; outwardly, faith moves mountains.”³⁷ In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus outlines the judgment of the nations. Final judgment will be based on a “least of these” promotion of faith that reaches out to the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the homeless, and to all those who are otherwise oppressed, distressed and marginalized. Faith in God, as James writes, spurs the Church of Jesus Christ onward to do good works, not as a requirement of faith, but as a result of faith.

³⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 15.

³⁷ Long, 114.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:14-17 states:

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (NRSV)

It is interesting to note that the messenger must be one called of God. Only one who has been called of God can translate the good news of the Gospel in such a way as to change the hearts and minds of hearers into a believing faith in Jesus Christ. During his earthly ministry, Jesus performed many miracles and spoke as God's messenger yet so many of the Jews of His day would not believe in Him even though the evidence (as seen in the miracles Jesus performed) was there. According to H. Richard Niebuhr:

Problems of faith and sight have, of course, occupied members of the community of Christian believers ever since the earliest hearers of the gospel asked its preachers to produce some sign from heaven validating its truth, or to show them the Father or the resurrected Christ. . . . Though the emphasis in the Letter to the Hebrews is on the unseen future on which the believer relies, yet what is unseen in present and past is also the object of faith, for it affirms, "by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (11:3).³⁸

Niebuhr also notes that Jesus pronounced a special blessing on those who believe and yet have not seen. "It is the unseen Jesus Christ who is the object of that genuine faith."³⁹

³⁸ Niebuhr, 14.

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

So to believe is to be persuaded that God through Jesus Christ is our Father, keeping faith with us and benevolent toward us in every way; but to believe this it is necessary to believe the Scriptures; yet in order to believe the Scriptures one must first believe that God is their author and that this author is what the Scriptures affirm him to be, faithful and benevolent.⁴⁰

One by-product of true faith is changed behavior. This is the kind of faith that helps the homeless and feeds the hungry. Based on the Great Commission's commandment to go into all the world and preach the gospel, the church itself has a missionary role that must be carried out by faith, trusting in the evidence of things unseen. As stated earlier in this treatise, author Loren Mead distinguishes worldwide missions from the new mission fields of the inner city and local neighborhoods. It is to these fields—where gang-banging and drug trafficking make the street corners unsafe—that the church must now take the Word through faith. This is the transformative power of faith in that which we cannot see. I Peter 1: 8 says: “Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him.”

New Testament Faith Stories

During Jesus' earthly ministry many were healed by their faith. Jesus told a woman with an “issue of blood” that her faith had made her whole. Other biblical stories tell of people who were beneficiaries of healing as a result of the faith of others. One such story concerned a paralytic man whose four friends cut a hole in the roof of a house and gently lowered him into Jesus' presence. The house was crowded with disciples and others who were there to hear the words of the rabbi. It was not the sick man's faith that

⁴⁰ Ibid, 18.

was noticed by Jesus, but the faith of his friends. Mark 2: 5 states: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

Another remarkable New Testament faith story concerns a Roman centurion. The centurion told Jesus that he believed that all Jesus had to do was speak the word and his servant would be healed. Matthew 8: 10, 13 states: “When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him. ‘Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.’ And to the centurion Jesus said, ‘Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.’ And the servant was healed in that hour.” (NRSV).

The centurion’s faith was strong enough to move Jesus to heal the centurion’s beloved servant across time and space.

Enduring Faith

There are times when faith is a test of endurance. For example, the three Hebrew boys chose to trust in God even if God did not deliver them from the jaws of lions (Dan 3: 16-18). In the New Testament we read how the Apostle Paul entreated the Lord on three occasions to remove a grievous thorn in his flesh. God’s answer was that God’s grace was sufficient to keep Paul even through a physical ailment.

Many unnamed men and women of faith were not delivered from difficult circumstances, yet God honored their faith. In fact, it takes more faith to endure than it does to escape.

Faith enables us to turn from the approval of the world and seek only the approval of God. If God is glorified by delivering His people, He will do it. If He sees fit not to be glorified by *not* delivering His people, then He will do that. But we must never conclude that the absence of deliverance means a lack of faith on the part of God’s children.⁴¹

⁴¹ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 838.

Not long ago this writer had an occasion to visit a friend who was dying. His wife was seated next to his bed while the writer prayed. Although the writer wanted to be encouraging to the couple, she could not pray a prayer of healing of the body—those words would not form. Instead, the prayer was that God’s peace would envelope the two of them. The writer’s husband later told her that in a private conversation with the sick friend, he was told by the friend that “no matter what happens, I am healed.” This friend’s faith allowed him to see a promise of a place that Jesus had gone ahead to prepare—that where Jesus is, there our friend would be also.

From David’s Family to Jesus’ New Family

From our exhaustive examination of faith, the writer now transitions to a more detailed study of one faithful servant of God—King David of Israel. Most specifically we will look at the family dynamics that led to the rape of his daughter Tamar.

The scriptural recount of David, his family and their complicated relationships is both interesting and disturbing from the standpoint of family dynamics, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. David had several wives (not uncommon in those days) and many sons and daughters as a result of those unions. From among the members of this diverse family ultimately grew a complicated web of intrigue, deceit, manipulation, lies, envy, lust, incest, and murder. Many lives would be destroyed as a result. One of them was Tamar, the daughter David had with his wife Maacah.

Tamar’s story is an insert in the life and times of David. It is important for this discussion as it takes place within a larger drama that included God’s plan of redemption for the world.

Tamar – The Violated Vessel

Born into privilege, Tamar had the best that life could offer—at least on the surface. She had a powerful father who ruled a kingdom of disparate tribes. Tamar was a princess in a royal court; part of a large extended family (including full and half siblings). As daughter of the king of Israel, her prospects for a good marriage (part of her value to her father) were high. In fact, it is not inconceivable that a marriage might have been arranged to promote matters of state. Tamar also was blessed with beauty, but that was to be her undoing.

King David's son and Tamar's half-brother, Amnon, had an unnatural love for his half-sister. He began lusting after her. So deep was his lust and longing for a sexual relationship with his sister that it affected his physical demeanor as he pined for the daughter of his father. Amnon knew and understood the Levitical laws that prohibited incest, but sin, not love, was at the core of his desire for Tamar. He would not be satisfied until he had her. Amnon plotted and ultimately devised a plan to get Tamar to his apartment so that he could have sex with her. It would not be an act of love, but of violence and rape. However, in defiling his sister Tamar, Amnon would ultimately defile his father's house and instigate a deadly series of violent occurrences among family members.

How could this happen in a family headed by a man *beloved* by Almighty God? Quoting from the *Creation of Patriarchy* by Girder Lerner, Walter Wink states that “Fathers, empowered to treat the virginity of their daughters as a family property asset, represent an authority as absolute as that of the king. Children reared and socialized

within such authority will grow in to the kinds of citizens needed in an absolutist kingship.”⁴²

Sexual sin had lain dormant in the house of David for years before Amnon conceived his vile plot. David, the head of the house, sinned against God and humanity when he had an affair with a married woman whose name was Bathsheba. She was the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Uriah was a soldier in the army of Israel and away from his home for long periods of time. Like his son would later do, David lusted after something that was not his to take. The affair resulted in pregnancy. To hide the affair, David plotted to have Bathsheba’s husband killed in battle so that he could take Bathsheba for his wife and legitimize the offspring. David thought that he could hide this sin from prying eyes, but God sees all.

The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to the court of David with a rebuke from the God of Israel. Nathan ended the rebuke with a statement of God’s judgment on the house of David.

I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. (II Samuel 12: 11-12, NRSV).

David repented of his sin, and the Lord forgave him. However, the son conceived by the illicit affair between David and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was to die. From that day on, calamity and the sword never left the house of David. Tamar is proof of that as David’s shame and degradation was visited on his daughter by his own son.

⁴² Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 118.

As noted in preceding paragraphs, Tamar's half-brother, Amnon, lusted after her. The plot to get her in his bed included a cousin, Jonadab, and also David who, upon Amnon's specific request, gave permission for Tamar to come alone and bring food to her brother's apartment.

Amnon thought he loved Tamar. First he was distressed over her . . . then he became ill longing for her. . . even to the point of looking haggard. But after he committed the shameful act, he hated Tamar vehemently and wanted to get rid of her! True love would never violate another person's body just to satisfy selfish appetites, nor would true love try to persuade someone to disobey the law of God. In his sensual cravings, Amnon confused lust with love and didn't realize that there is a fine line between selfish love (lust) and hatred. Before he sinned, he wanted Tamar all to himself, but after he sinned, he couldn't get rid of her fast enough.

Sexual sins usually produce that kind of emotional damage. . . . Having lost her virginity, Tamar was not a good prospect for marriage, and she could no longer reside in the apartments with the virgins. Where would she go? Who would take her in? Who would even want her? How could she prove that Amnon was the aggressor and that she hadn't seduced him?⁴³

Tamar was the victim of a brutal crime. She was further victimized as she seemingly had no place and no one to turn for help and for advocacy for her rights as a person. Her father David was told about the rape and although he was angry about it, he did nothing to help the victim—his own daughter. Her full brother, Absalom, plotted revenge, but more for his own reasons (a desire for the throne of David) than for his victimized and now socially ostracized sister.

In her treatise, "Violence and the Bible," taken from the book, *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos writes the following: "The household should provide a measure of safety to all contained within it

⁴³ Wiersbe, 576.

and the most threatening situations ensue when the walls of the protective household prove to be permeable. Biblical narratives thus verify a reality that dominates women's lives today."⁴⁴

Walter Wink describes family systems as being imbedded in patriarchy and male dominance. According to Wink, "It is in families where most women and children are battered, and where the majority of murders take place."⁴⁵

In her book, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited*, Marie Fortune discusses the presumed power privilege of the male:

The power of the male is what gives him the prerogative to take what he wants sexually. The powerlessness of the female forces her to submit to his wishes and desires, or to use covert means to gain some power in the relationship. Coercion and manipulation become accepted means of interaction. Male sexuality begins to appear predatory in nature – that is, a man takes what he wants when he wants it without regard for the consequences to others.⁴⁶

Fortune further describes male sexuality in the following manner:

- A desire that its object be "innocent," that is, powerless, passive, subordinate;
- A need to *objectify* the other in order to avoid intimacy;
- A desire to *use* another person exclusively to meet one's own needs;
- An ability to *rationalize* the experience: "she likes it, wants it, needs it; it's good to teach kids about sex...";
- A lack of regard for the other as an autonomous person;
- A lack of responsibility for one's acts; no one makes any demands or requires any form of accountability;

⁴⁴ Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos, "Violence and the Bible," in *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John S. McClure, Nancy J. Ramsay, eds., (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), 35.

⁴⁵ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 118.

⁴⁶ Marie Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2005), 19.

- An inability to find erotic or emotional pleasure with an equal, male or female, or with someone who takes the initiative sexually;
- A sexual orientation that is predatory and dependent on the subordination of the partner;
- An attempt to avoid rejection by always being in control.⁴⁷

Amnon's behavior before and after the rape seems to follow this pattern. For example, the Bible indicates that Amnon felt disgust after the rape, not for his horrible act, but for the victim, Tamar. She pleaded with him to allow her to stay with him; she said that her father would give her to him, if he would only ask for her. Amnon's response was to have her evicted from his apartment.

Disgraced, Tamar turned to her brother Absalom. Although Absalom's hatred for his brother was intensified because of the rape, his motivation to kill his brother was not based on avenging his sister's honor, but on his own selfish motivation to assume the crown.

Absalom's inclusion in the story is unique. He neither upheld what today are lauded as "traditional family values," nor was this son of King David a paragon of virtue. He was, in fact, more incestuous than the brother he killed in cold blood. Absalom not only raped ten of his father's unnamed second-class wives (commonly known as concubines), but violated them in public view at the urging of his friends and cowarriors: *And Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.* (2 Samuel 16:22, KJV)⁴⁸

Just as the prophet Nathan foretold, the sword and calamity never left the house of David. Absalom did eventually have Amnon killed. Later, Absalom died during a failed attempt to snatch the throne from his aged father.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁸ Arthur Frederick Ide, *Battered and Bruised: All the Women of the Old Testament* (Las Colinas, TX, Monument Press, 1993), 327-328.

The story of Tamar is only a footnote in the faith-story of her father, King David, through whose line came Jesus. The question we ask is: “Was God with Tamar as God was with David?” Pamela Cooper-White posits the following:

Our faith tells us that what happened to Tamar was a violation not of her father’s property rights and political assets, but a violation of her own personhood. Our faith tells us that Tamar did not deserve what happened to her. It was wrong, and it should never have happened. And I believe that our faith tells us that God did not cause Tamar’s suffering. Rather, God stood with Tamar, as silent in the narrative as the suffering woman herself. God suffered with Tamar, and although her story is lost to us down through the silence of the historical record, Tamar is not lost with God. With God, Tamar is not alone, and she is vindicated for eternity.

Now it is up to us, as the church, to proclaim her vindication and make a manifest in our truth-telling and vigilance to bring about empowerment, relationship, justice, and change. In speaking her truth, *our* truth, we reweave the *concilium* and become the *re-concilers* that God has called us to be.⁴⁹

Although Tamar’s faith is never directly mentioned in the text, we can assume that her confidence in Yahweh was shaken to the core after the rape. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, faith sees only dimly and as mere mortals humans are left wondering and questioning whether God is truly there. If there is a message of faith to be learned from the violation of Tamar and of all those who have been brutally victimized by abusers, perhaps Tillich expresses it best as faith relates to doubt. According to Tillich, doubt is always present as an element in the structure of faith.

This is the difference between faith and immediate evidence either of perceptual or of logical character. There is no faith without an intrinsic “in spite of” and the courageous affirmation of oneself in the state of ultimate concern. This intrinsic element of doubt breaks into the open and under special individual and social conditions. If doubt appears, it should not be

⁴⁹ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church’s Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 42.

considered as the negation of faith, but as an element which was always and will always be present in the act of faith.⁵⁰

In his book, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Daniel L. Migliore tells us that the world we live in is ambiguous and doubt will arise. According to Migliore, believers experience the “incongruity between faith and lived reality.”⁵¹

They believe in a living Lord, but more often than not they experience the absence rather than the presence of God. They believe in the transforming power of the Spirit of God, but they know all too well the impotence of the church and of themselves.⁵²

Restoring the Family and Building the Kingdom

In the New Testament we are introduced to Jesus, the Savior of the world who came through the line of David, a man of faith, yet a flawed human being in every respect. Jesus’ active ministry only lasted three and a half years, but during that time, He laid the foundation for the transformation and the redefinition of family.

Tamar’s story is one in which God’s redemptive plan of salvation can be seen even in the midst of this particular dysfunctional family. God’s only son was born of the line of David and sent into the world so that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16). It was a plan based on God’s love for humanity. Although David’s daughter Tamar is not mentioned again in Biblical annals, her father—even though a failed parent, a murderer and an adulterer—is described as one loved by God.

⁵⁰ Tillich, 21-22.

⁵¹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1991), 3.

⁵² Ibid., 3.

God has been trying to restore the family and regain a personal relationship with humanity since sin came into the world through Adam. According to author Myles Monroe, “. . . The most important relationship the first man, Adam, had on earth was with heaven. This is why the Holy Spirit of God was intimate with mankind from the beginning.”⁵³

When God realized that Adam was alone, God created woman to be a complement to the man. They were to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth. They were to have dominion over the earth. Adam and Eve were designed to be in relationship with each other and with God as God’s representatives—ambassadors—here on earth.

His indwelling presence guaranteed constant communication and fellowship with the will, mind, intent, and purposes of God and heaven so that He could execute His government’s will on earth. This relationship made the Holy Spirit of God the most important Person on earth and established Him as the key component of the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The loss or separation of man from the Holy Spirit of God would render mankind a disqualified envoy of heaven on earth, for he would not know the will or mind of the government of heaven for earth.⁵⁴

Jesus, the second Adam, came into the world not to create a religion or a denomination, but that the world through him might be saved. His purpose was the restoration of God’s family and God’s kingdom on earth. God told the serpent in the Garden of Eden that there would be enmity between it and the woman and between its offspring and hers.

³⁴ Myles Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom: Ancient Hope for Our 21st Century World* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2004), 33.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

The heart of this promise is the coming of an “offspring” through a woman who would break the power of the adversary over mankind and regain the authority and dominion Adam once held, and through a process of conflict, restore the Kingdom back to mankind. This was the first promise of a Messiah-king and the return of the Kingdom. Therefore, the greatest need of man was identified by what he lost; he did not lose a religion or heaven, but rather a kingdom. In God’s restoration and redemptive program, heaven would not be His primary focus or goal for man, but rather the redemption, restoration and re-establishment of His kingdom on earth. This would be the principle purpose and assignment of the promised Messiah.⁵⁵

Jesus brought life, hope and love into the world that had been shattered by sin. He said, “I have come that you might have life, and that more abundantly.” While on earth, Jesus established a new kind of family as Walter Wink says, “made up of those whose delusions have been shattered, who are linked, not by the tightest of all bonds, the blood-tie, but by the doing of God’s will. These are ‘my brother and sister and mother’ (Mark 3:31-35).”⁵⁶

Jesus redefined the concept of family. In the synoptic gospels of Matthew 12: 46-50, Mark 3:31-35, (referenced above) and Luke 8: 19-21, the writers tell of an incident in which Jesus’ earthly family attempted to see him as he was teaching a group of people. Although the scripture implies that Jesus ignored his natural family, Jesus made it clear that he was changing the concept of family.

In the book, *The Historical Jesus: A Historical Guide*, authors Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz note that the new family consists of ‘hearers’ of the word.

Jesus’ mother, brothers and sisters come to Jesus to bring him back because they think him crazy. But Jesus distances himself from his family

⁵⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶ Wink, 119.

by redefining the concept of family.” ‘Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother’ (Mark 3:35). The fact that the role of father remains unoccupied is in part explained biographically by the (postulated) early death of Joseph and in part theologically by the exclusiveness of the heavenly Father. At all events it contains a repudiation of ‘paternal power’, just as the altered sequence of members of the family (brothers, sisters, mother) expresses a change in status.⁵⁷

Theissen and Merz also state that the family of God includes those who, like Jesus, leave house and home, and find acceptance among their new brothers and sisters in the faith. Regarding this *new family*, Walter Wink writes that the new family consisting of those who do the *will of God* the father are the children of God and mother, brother and sister to Jesus.⁵⁸ God, then, is the greater, ultimate parent.

Just as Jesus changed the concept of family, so by extension did he change the way in which women were viewed in the family. Jesus neither objectified women nor did he patronize them. Instead, he healed and liberated them.

Jesus healed numerous women. Through them the kingdom of God is shown to be a healing power which restores the bodily integrity of women and incorporates them into the community of those grasped by the kingdom of God. The charisma of Jesus by which he performs miracles thus does not make women objects of his action but rather involves them in an event in which they take an active part.⁵⁹

Today's Family

The twenty-first century idea of family has changed dramatically from what God originally intended. Thousands of children in this country are being raised by single

⁵⁷ Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Historical Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 218.

⁵⁸ Wink, 119.

⁵⁹ Theissen and Merz, 222.

parents. In the African American community, one in 10 males is incarcerated. The resultant impact on the family is that there is now a generation of fatherless children. In addition, with the growing numbers of incarcerated women, grandparents are now raising more and more of their children's children.

Homosexual relationships also have created opportunities for new kinds of families. The number of gay families is growing. Although controversial, gay marriages are redefining the concept of family.

The family is not intrinsically evil. Like every Power it is created by God, and is thus holy and just and good; it is fallen; and it is capable of redemption. Families are to be critiqued and challenged, a function performed by the new family established by Jesus. We never transcend the need for kinship; . . . The goal is not the eradication of the kinship ties, but their transformation into a nonpatriarchal community of mutuality and love. As such, families can become exemplary of the new family of Jesus.⁶⁰

As previously discussed, the new family of Jesus is the Church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus told his disciple, Peter, that he would be the rock upon which the church would be built. So strong would the church be that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. The declaration was given to Peter after he correctly stated Jesus' true identity—that He was the Son of God. It would seem logical to extrapolate that the church as the family of God is the basis for God's kingdom on earth. In that same passage of scripture Jesus told Peter He was giving him the *keys* to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever Peter bound on earth would be bound in heaven. Whatever he loosed on earth, would be loosed in heaven. (Mat. 16: 17-19, KJV)

⁶⁰ Walter Wink, 120.

By extension, we understand that the keys were given not only to Peter and the disciples but to the church that would be built after that hillside meeting. It is clear that the church has been given great power. As the church uses its power to utilize the keys to the kingdom, then and only then will families become empowered to live as true kingdom citizens.

With that in mind, it is this writer's belief that now is the time for the church, the body of Christ, to take the keys to the kingdom and be about kingdom building here on Earth. An essential element in this is that the church must provide tools and resources to help strengthen families in crisis. This can only be done one person/one family at a time. However, family households are not sacrosanct. Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos notes:

The household should provide a measure of safety to all contained within it and the most threatening situations ensue when the walls of the protective household prove to be permeable. Biblical narratives thus verify a reality that dominates many women's lives today.⁶¹

Christians have been given the power to change things around us and to create new family realities by binding the forces of evil—domination, power and control that continue to primarily dominate the lives of women and children today—and releasing the forces of righteousness through proactive engagement of our belief and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some may ask: “Is there a transformative element to faith that lends itself to the difficult circumstances individuals face in their daily lives? Is faith active, dynamic, progressive, kinetic activity or is it some amorphous feeling that we speak of, but

⁶¹ van Wijk-Bos, *Violence and the Bible in Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, 32.

insubstantial in its reality?” This writer believes that faith is a holistic experience of God that activates the lives, hearts and minds of Christians.

Our faith is informed by the confident belief in the God that Tillich calls the “ultimate concern.” Faith has the power to bring the believers together to heal, the help, to deliver, to save, to transform, and to quicken the communities in which we live.

Faith brings conviction that God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God will empower our daily lives even though trouble is all around. In Romans 8:25, the Apostle Paul writes the following: “But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (NRSV)

Theological Foundation

Twentieth century theologian Karl Barth has done a profound work of systematic theological construction. Much of Barth’s writings can be characterized as conservative. For example, this writer takes issue with Barth’s ideas regarding the so-called God-ordained relationship between men and women which places women in a subordinate position under the male. Still, Barth’s understanding of God through Jesus Christ has relevance to this writer. Barth recognizes that the entirety of human history revolves around creation’s relationship to God. He declares that it is God who reveals the God-self to humanity and that it is only through revelation that humankind can get to know God. The highest form of revelation is seen through the person of Jesus Christ (the Living Word).

God is the One whose name and causes are borne by Jesus Christ He has also bound Himself to man and the world in creating them. What is presented to us is the faithfulness of the God and His loving approach to

the creature. There is set before us His specific coming, acting and speaking in the creaturely world with the intention of asserting, protecting and restoring His right to the creature, and therefore the creature's own right and honor.⁶²

From Barth's understanding, God is in relationship to humanity through intentionality. God wills the God-self to be known within creation. Before time began, God particularly chose and set apart the people of Israel to be a nation most blessed. Through that nation, and through a particular line (Davidic) chosen from that people, God allowed Jesus to be born to be the propitiation for the sins of the world,

. . . who created His people Israel by His Word, and separated them from all other peoples, and later separated the Church from Israel. It is the God who exercises His rule in what He wills and does with this people, and the people first called Israel and later the Church. It is He, this God, who as the Lord and Shepherd of that people is also, of course, the World-ruler, the Creator of all things, the Controller of all events both great and small.⁶³

For Barth, the knowledge of God is intertwined with God's own revelation. Humanity cannot attain the knowledge of God through specific or personal search. Knowledge, he posits, comes only by an act of God—God's grace and mercy as revealed through the Word of God. The church, therefore, must be the deliverer of the message of truth and love by taking the Word to the uttermost part of the world starting in their own neighborhoods.

Another twentieth century theologian, Daniel Migliore, believes that humans were put on earth to be in relationship with each other and with God. In his book, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Migliore states:

⁶² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection with Introduction by Helmut Gollwitzer* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 30.

⁶³ Barth, 31.

God is creator of a world whose inhabitants are profoundly interdependent. The world was created by God not as an assemblage of solitary units but for life together, and its structure of existence-in-community reflects God's own eternal life in triune community We are led to confess that creation has a purpose. God creates not by accident, not by caprice, but by and for the Word of God. According to scripture, Jesus Christ is the Word who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were created (John 1: 1-3; Hebrews 11:3). He is the goal toward which all the whole creation moves, and it is this divine goal that makes of the world a cosmos rather than a chaos. In Christ all things hold together (Colossians 1: 17). The purpose for which God created the world is decisively disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

Finally, Ivone Gebara echoes Migliore in the belief that God is seeking a personal relationship with human beings. About that issue, she says the following:

. . . The word God is the name we give to the extraordinary relationship that evokes ecstasy and leads us to see flashes of the greatness of the mystery of the Divine Body. To speak of God is to speak of that which is beyond us. To speak of God is to affirm the 'something' that we are and that goes beyond us, based on human experience and moving beyond it. . . . For us human beings, this relationship is personal: We speak of it out of our personal experience. We only delight in love when it refers to concrete persons, we only struggle for justice when there are persons who suffer injustice. We only seek the beauty of living beings and of all things because their beauty is a part of us; this beauty attracts us, dwells in our flesh, and is part of our living tissue. Therefore God is and is not a person. This relatedness is expressed personally, humanly—and is at the same time far more than human and far more than simply personal.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 90.

⁶⁵ Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 105.

Understanding the Church's Role as Imitators of Christ

In reviewing and responding to the works of the above referenced theologians, this writer notes that all tend to agree that God's purpose is to be in relationship with humanity. Jesus, who the Bible calls the *author and finisher of our faith*, did not spend as much time in the temple as He did in the streets of Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. GFMI is attempting to model its efforts after the example set by our Lord and Savior. Jesus' earthly ministry took him straight to the streets where he interacted with all types of people. His work is, or should be, the model for all Christians today.

To say that Jesus Christ is the truth of the Christian story calls for further examination. It is one thing to assert that the New Testament describes Jesus as the Oppressed One who came to liberate the poor and the weak . . . but it is quite another to ask, Who is Jesus Christ for us today? If twentieth-century Christians are to speak the truth for their sociohistorical situation, they cannot merely repeat the story of what Jesus did and said in Palestine, as if it were self-interpreting for us today. Truth is more than the retelling of the biblical story. Truth is the divine happening that invades our contemporary situation, revealing the meaning of the past for the present so that we are made new creatures for the future. It is therefore our commitment to the divine truth, as witnessed to in the biblical story, that requires us to investigate the connection between Jesus' words and deeds in first-century Palestine and our existence today. This is the crux of the christological issue that no Christian theology can avoid.⁶⁶

Reading through the New Testament, it is interesting to note that the early church lived and breathed with Jesus on the mind. They were motivated to win souls for Christ, and because they were anxiously awaiting His return, martyrdom seemed a singular sacrifice of love for the one who had died for their sins.

⁶⁶ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 99.

Bible stories tell us of a God who was not only concerned about, but who proactively intervened on behalf of His chosen people the Jews, who were oppressed and marginalized through years of slavery, tribal wars, invasions, and homelessness. The omnipotent God chose to liberate Jewish slaves from Egyptian oppression by uniquely preparing one man, Moses, to lead the children of Israel out of bondage and into the Promised Land.

Nearly two millennia later, God as liberator of the oppressed used a Civil War in the United States and an uncertain President, Abraham Lincoln, to free African slaves who would for the most part, adopt the Christian religion of their former taskmasters. Through the years, God has used ordinary people to bring attention to injustices that were adversely affecting people. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is certainly one whose oratory and non-violent tactics brought attention to the economic and social disparities affecting Black Americans in this country. His was the preacher's voice that activated the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and galvanized religious leaders (black, white, Jewish, etc.) from all over the nation with the words, "We shall overcome."

Blacks tend to share a perspective on the Bible that celebrates God's liberating action in history. Traditionally, this liberation has centered on salvation from the power of sin and evil, but there has always been a parallel emphasis for blacks on salvation from the evil concretized in racial exclusivity and the dehumanization of the poor. Perhaps because of the real effect of the brutality of slavery, segregation, and discrimination, blacks share a common ethos of salvation in which the biblical story speaks naturally to their story. This is what some call "the hermeneutical privilege of the poor and oppressed."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 29, 30

Out of this locus would come liberationist theologians like James Cone and others. Later, the voices of African American women were heard through their distinctly womanist interpretation of the Bible. It was the Civil Rights Movement that brought these voices to the forefront through their unique hermeneutic interpretation.

It is important to recognize that like their brothers, African American women were heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement from the beginning, although not in any visible positions of leadership. Unfortunately, many women found the leaders of the Movement to be sexist.

The singular concern of the womanist enterprise is the full liberation of African American women from these multiple oppressive structures that influence their daily lives; this liberation would lead to the liberation of the entirety of humanity. “Wholeness” is a central conceptual paradigm employed by womanists to expand their analyses of their own social locations to address broader human existential concerns.⁶⁸

Addressing the broader human existential concerns is what this writer believes has been a failure of the church. It is this writer’s belief that the church has become complacent and comfortable behind its four walls in which the people of God come to worship. The Black church in particular needs to be renewed—a renewing of the mind as stated by the Apostle Paul—so that as it did in the 1950s and 1960s, it will once again act in the power of Jesus Christ. Only in that way will the gospel message become relevant to the needs and conditions of today’s audiences.

If it (the Church) realizes the great contradiction between its calling and the reality of its life, it will pray constantly for the renewal of its life. Knowing that Christ himself cleanses it, it will seek to cleanse itself.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 91

The Church is the house, the building built by God. It is the old 'dwelling of David' (Acts 15:16) which has been rebuilt. It needs constant building up (Eph. 4:12; 4:16) . . . Exactly in the same way the new people made new by God needs renewal.⁶⁹

Jesus' charge to the church is called *The Great Commission* and is found in Matthew 28: 18-20. The Great Commission is foundational to GFMI's core purpose as well as the New Vision of Faith Fellowship in which GFMI holds membership.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NRSV)

It is interesting to this writer that Jesus' Great Commission required faith (the substance of things hoped for) to believe that proactivity in the spread of the Good News was possible even without the physical presence of the Savior to lead the disciples. These instructions were not only to guide the disciples, but to make way for a kind of *affirmative action* by the Church of God—that we go, make disciples, baptize them and teach them to obey the commands of Christ. That, to this writer, is faith in action.

Jesus ended His commissioning with a promise to be with the disciples, and ultimately the Church, until the end of time. It is a golden promise with a blessed assurance. In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them power to be witnesses. That power would support them in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and ultimately as the Gospel message was taken throughout the world.

⁶⁹ W.A. Visser't Hooft, *The Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 39.

We understand from New Testament readings (Acts 2) that the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. On that day, 120 of Jesus' disciples were assembled in an upper room when the Holy Spirit, like cloven tongues of fire, descended on each of those present in the room. So extraordinary was this moment that the disciples left that place with power and authority and went out onto the streets of Jerusalem. Peter preached his first sermon—a message of salvation through Jesus Christ—and 3,000 souls were saved.

Like the original disciples, Christians today cannot profess Christ as Savior and Lord while rejecting His teachings (which were founded on principles of love) and His Great Commission (which commands us to evangelize the world in His name). As Christians teach Christ's truths within the challenging context of today's socio-economic environment, the promise in Jesus' Great Commission declares that we can be confident in faith that Jesus Christ will be with us, in us, and through us to express and deliver the tangible love of Christ by *being doers of the Word and not hearers only*. In his book, *Christ the Reconciler*, Peter Schmiechen states:

To reform the church one must also speak of the world. This is not to suggest that the world must set the agenda or the standards – theological reform must proceed from the gospel. Rather it is to be clear about the context of our discussion. Forces at work in the world – creative and destructive – are also at work in the church's people and its structures. They are signs of our time. How the church responds to these powers is decisive in many ways. Some responses are themselves points of contention: for example, consider the reactions to differing attitudes on abortion. Other responses are significant because they define the church to its members and to other Christian bodies: for example, attitudes toward war and peace. Even the silence of the church on such issues as sex, violence, and money is crucial because such a refusal to respond sends a clear message. As a community of the Spirit, the church needs to see the signs of our

times. Such a reading is an act of spiritual discernment, whereby we acknowledge what is happening in us and to us, but also name its significance in light of the sovereignty of God and the grace revealed in Jesus Christ.⁷⁰

Whole communities of people are dying—some due to violence in their own homes—and the church, by and large, has turned its back on them. Many of the walking wounded pass right in front of the buildings that house the church. Is the church ready to receive them not only with a message of hope and comfort (some might say platitudes), but also with programs and services designed to both recognize and provide realistic resources to help soothe the pain and perhaps provide realistic alternatives for their lives?

With this question as the foundation, it is the position of this writer that the church can no longer be silent on the systemic evils that disrupt the peace in the place called home. These important issues are not merely private family matters, but substantive challenges that affect harmony within the body of Christ, God's family. Therefore, in order to be *relevant*, and in order for it to work *real time* in the lives of its people, the church must ask and answer these questions: What and who is Jesus in the lives of people today? What are the lessons to be learned from His life and his teachings? Can these lessons be translated to empower the body of Christ? How do we activate the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within the body of Christ?

Facing each actual situation as it arose, Jesus dealt with it in a way that would further a neighborly society. He did not hesitate, for instance, to heal men on the Sabbath, despite all the prohibitions of those in authority, for he had found a surer clue to the conduct of life in the facts of human need than in the hair-splitting regulations of a legalized religion . . .

⁷⁰ Peter Schmiechen, *Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences, and Enemies* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 61.

Life of the quality that Jesus showed to be possible for individuals is an essential part of his intention for society. His attitude toward the lawgivers and socially minded prophets of the Hebrews is typical: he came “not to destroy but to fulfill” the highest aspirations of every people for their collective life. Under his influence, far more than under any other, men of conflicting interests and hostile races have learned to live together in the enlightenment of brotherly co-operation. . . .Far more than we usually recognize, Jesus had a statesmanlike grasp of political and social conditions. Because he could read the signs of the times, he saw how little the rulers of his nation understood them.⁷¹

Conclusion

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ and adherents to His Great Commission, the Church must not only read, but be responsive to the signs of the times—fully grasping the impact that the economic, social and political environment has on the lives of real people.

Within the New Testament, we are admonished by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans (12:10) to be devoted to one another and to put the interest of the other person above our interest. Paul also advises the church at Philippi (2:3) to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility to consider others better than ourselves. Within the context of the Greater Grand Crossing community and under the banner of Greater Faith Ministries International (with support of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship) this writer hopes to create awareness of the need for proactivity and support of victims of a not so silent epidemic lurking in the Christian community—sexual and domestic violence. This epidemic not only brings pain to individual families, but it spills over to the pews of the church, corroding the environment like a cancerous sore.

⁷¹ Gilbert A. Beaver, *An Exploration of Co-Operative Fellowship (Koinonia)*, (Association Press: Printed in the United States of America, 1950), 24-30.

Many people in the Church, including church-school teachers and pastors, tend to pick and choose biblical texts that suit their own tastes and personal values, without making much attempt to reflect critically on how these values often only mirror their own narrow socialization. Furthermore, Church leaders barely study the ancient historical and cultural background that gave rise to the Word of God. What is forgotten is that the Bible confronts us with a series of theologically motivated histories of ancient communities (including families and households) in crisis or struggle, trying to make sense out of constantly changing socioeconomic and political circumstances.⁷²

This writer agrees with Felder's observations. In many ways, the Bible mirrors the challenges faced in modern society. Like the examples shown in the ancient texts, there are families, households and communities who are today trying to make sense of their constantly changing socioeconomic and political environments.

Pastors and teachers must preach the hard truths from difficult texts if healing is to come to the church. That means that the pervasive silence must be broken concerning the issue of sexual abuse and domestic violence. It is this writer's belief that the church needs the Lord of creation to heal its heart and transform its mind. God, who created the nuclear family and extended that concept to include a new family of Christian believers, does not sanction abuse or dehumanization within that structure. That message must be promoted by a twenty-first century generation of preachers and lay members as the *good news of the gospel*.

⁷² Felder, 154

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEED

Sexual and domestic violence is rarely discussed through traditional preaching, teaching, prayer, or pastoral counseling in the church. The current economic and social crisis in this country will likely intensify frustration, depression, and rage; all of this can lead to violence both in and out of the home. In his book, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*, Al Miles states that, “the misconception that Christian victims of domestic violence can somehow be freed by faith, prayer, a positive attitude, and a stronger belief in God has forced many abused women to remain in unhealthy and potentially lethal relationships with violent men.”¹ Miles further states that abused women are everywhere—even in our congregations. “If ministers are going to provide effective care to these women, we must first recognize that fact.”²

The church *must be* a place of healing—starting with pastors and leaders. That means the church must be prepared with tools and resources that advocate for, support, encourage, and empower families dealing with serious issues like domestic violence. Families are the foundation of the church—and if it is to build the kingdom of God on earth, the church must first create an environment of trust where these types of troubling issues are brought out into the open, and second, provide resources to help families in trouble.

¹ Al Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*, 59.

² *Ibid.*, 58.

Problem, Plan and Market

This project addresses the staggering pervasiveness of sexual and domestic violence within the Christian community. Accordingly, the hypothesis from which this research is grounded is: There are many people in the church who have been hurt by sexual and domestic violence. The church has not done enough—through preaching, teaching, biblical interpretation, pastoral care and counseling—to provide resources, support and help for those who have been hurt and wounded by domestic violence. The purpose of the project, therefore, is to inform, educate and enlighten pastors/leaders, youth and members of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship. The specific target markets for this project will be discussed in detail in succeeding paragraphs.

Research Design

Qualitative research was used for this project. Specifically, three informational workshops were developed to increase knowledge and awareness of sexual and domestic violence and its impact on the church. Data collection included pre- and post-workshop surveys, participant observation, personal journaling, post-workshop participant interviews, and post-workshop reflection meetings.

Initially, the thought for this project was that all of the research and programmatic outreach would be done at the author's home church. After meetings with experts in the field, the design, and therefore the audience for the workshops were changed. As a result of the support of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship, the pastors and leaders within the

Fellowship as well as members of each individual church ultimately became the primary audiences for most of the workshops.

The project was facilitated over the summer and into the fall of 2009. Pre- and post-workshop surveys were used to ascertain attendee knowledge of specific issues related to domestic violence. Workshops were designed to educate, inform, and enlighten participants. Survey questions, by design, were generally worded. In the event that participants either knew someone or were themselves living in a dangerous situation, it was also important to the researcher that resources of varying types were clearly available (e.g., numbers to call, places to go for help). Workshop presenters included experts in the fields of criminal justice and women's and children's safety issues.

Managing Data

Data for each of the three workshops were put together in color coded packets (a different color for each workshop) to assure an orderly process of data analysis. First, the researcher carefully supervised the collection of data (particularly pre- and post-workshop surveys) to assure that responses were gathered from all workshop attendees. Each set was placed in its own color coded folder for later tabulation. Handwritten field notes as well as audio recordings were created as a means of documenting each workshop. The handwritten notes (including comments and later interviews) were placed in the appropriate color coded folder for review and transcription. Each packet was reviewed to assure that all data were collected and appropriately packaged in order to begin the process of data interpretation.

Data Interpretation

The process of data interpretation included tabulating each of the responses to the three sets of pre and post-workshop survey questions. In order to standardize and simplify the process of comparison, the researcher calculated percentages instead of using a numeric count. The use of percentages made it easier for the researcher to compare any variances in answers to questions from the pre- to the post-workshop survey. Initial conversations with experts in the field of sexual and domestic violence were documented and used as a way of deciding what variances or differences from the pre- to post-workshop surveys might be significant. Direct quotations from participant interviews also were used in some cases to further augment the data. To assure the fundamental soundness of her approach, the researcher did a review of literature to find similar examples of research—previously published dissertations on sexual and domestic violence.

After all data was collected, each piece of data was coded and categorized to ascertain whether any themes or patterns emerged from the participant responses (pre and post surveys, interviews, fieldnotes and personal journals). The researcher asked: "Were there responses that were similar in meaning across the three sets of data that would support a project finding?" These themes and/or findings are reported in Chapter Five.

Data Analysis

This research took place in a real social setting, among real people, some of whom have had real encounters with sexual and domestic violence. The goal was to inform (information on domestic violence was provided); educate (the setting was

designed to be conducive to instruction), and enlighten (the information presented gave the attendees tools and resources that could be used to help themselves or someone else).

In the book, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman indicate that there is no “fact of the matter” with qualitative research.³ As much as possible, however, this researcher took into consideration the following four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each is discussed below.

Credibility: To assure credibility of the project especially in terms of its stated purpose—to inform, to educate, and to enlighten program participants—the researcher includes participant comments, as well as data collected from pre- and post-workshop surveys, observations and individual interviews. The New Vision of Faith Fellowship was the incubator for this project. As a member of the Fellowship, the researcher is able to continue monitoring post-workshop behaviors/activities—not only of the organization, but also of member churches in relation to activities centered on domestic and sexual violence.

Transferability: To assure transferability of this project to other contexts or settings, the researcher has thoroughly described the context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The researcher documents the specific markets (including numbers of attendees) to which the workshops were targeted—pastoral leadership, teens, and lay church members. Complete project design and data collection procedures are included in the write-up. That write-up includes the networking process that led to

³ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, eds., *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 277.

finding workshop facilitators, determining design of the pre- and post-workshop surveys, and observations that led to personal interviews and participant comments.

Dependability: The researcher's role in the planning and execution of this project is completely detailed in this work. Facilitation of the workshops was orchestrated by experts in the field of domestic violence. The facilitators hold credible positions within the Chicago Police Department and Cook County's major public hospital. As a resource for the pre- and post-workshop surveys, the researcher used material from Faith Trust Institute. This is an organization devoted to helping those who have been impacted by domestic violence. The Institute provides news and information, helpful resources, as well as current research on the subject. Context associates were additional eyes and ears for the researcher during program delivery. Among other things, their assistance included providing useful insights and observations.

Confirmability: To assure confirmability of this study, the researcher has triangulated the data through pre- and post-workshop surveys used, participant interviews, comments and observations. Data were collected and archived, and are available for review upon request.

Target Market

Church leaders (pastors, etc.), lay members, and youth were the audiences for the workshops. Although the primary purpose of the workshops was that they be educational and informative, the researcher also desired something much more elusive—that the *church* could begin to be seen as a place of healing, a kind of *balm in Gilead* for those

who have been wounded by violence in their homes. That is why a critical component of the research involved workshops facilitated within the church's four walls.

In undertaking the journey, the writer's first order of business was to meet with the six context associates who were all a part of the researcher's home church (Greater Faith Ministries International). It was intended that the proposed workshops be folded into Greater Faith's Health and Wellness Ministry outreach.

Next, pamphlets, newsletters, hotline number information, and flyers related to domestic violence were placed on the resource table at GFMI. That table was strategically placed in an openly visible and easily accessed location at GFMI.

Workshop Facilitators

Once the decision was made to develop a series of workshops (guided by what the researcher believes to be the hand of God), the next step was to find qualified workshop presenters. To begin the process, the writer discussed speaker possibilities with professional associates and friends within the New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFF). Conversations also included others within her network who might have known individuals with experience and knowledge in the field of domestic violence. The networking process included telephone calls and personal meetings. These conversations led the writer to two major entities that operate within the City of Chicago and Cook County: 1) the Chicago Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit, and 2) the Domestic Violent Unit within John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County, the county's major medical institution. Finally, a series of telephone calls resulted in appointments to meet with all individuals who could be helpful in the facilitation of the project's goals.

The first meeting was with Sgt. Maude Noflin, a veteran of the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) Domestic Violence Unit, who had led the unit for a number of years. Also in attendance at that meeting were CPD Officers Claretha Cross and Shawn Kennedy. The combined operating experience of these individuals in the area of domestic violence totaled more than 30 years. A comfort zone was quickly established as the researcher described her purpose in requesting the meeting.

Setting the stage, the researcher admitted that she had little expertise on domestic violence, and that the workshops she was hoping to accomplish were proposed research for a doctorate in ministry program. Next, she explained her concept of the proposed informational workshops to the officers. Essentially, the writer's view of the workshops was simple—they should inform, educate and help attendees to understand the pervasiveness of domestic abuse among Christians (from victims to victimizers). Her stated desire was to hold the workshops in the church, to position the church as the place where information about difficult life challenges can provide hope to victims and perhaps even a beginning to the healing process.

Speaking for her unit, Sgt. Noflin described their work as a support to the City of Chicago's effort to reduce the incidences of domestic violence by:

- a. Developing and distributing a variety of *literature* on the subject to churches, community based organizations, schools, and a wide variety of other institutions across the city, and
- b. Community outreach. Here is where the proposed workshops fit into the unit's mission and purpose.

The discussions that followed concerned who should be the target audience for the workshops. Based on the researcher's stated goals and the unit's own core competencies, Sgt. Noflin suggested that the researcher consider targeting church leadership first (specifically pastors, deacons and lay leaders). The rationale for this decision was based on the following assumptions:

- a. More often than not, church leaders are not conversant on the subject of domestic violence. As a result, there has been a lack of attention paid from the pulpit to the issue of domestic violence.
- b. The Chicago Police Department actually reports over 16,000 cases of sexual and domestic violence every month. It can be assumed that many of the victims are Christian, some of whom probably regularly attend church. It can also be assumed that some of the perpetrators of violence also are church goers.
- c. The current unemployment rate is in double digits, and many families are in financial trouble. This type of situation serves to fuel domestic violence.
- d. Finally, it was agreed that the issue of Sexual and Domestic Violence is one that needs more focus in the church through preaching, teaching, prayer, and pastoral counseling.

It was decided that the second workshop be directed to young people (ages 11-18). The rationale for this centered on the very public break-up after an incident of dating violence of pop singer Rihanna and her boyfriend, hip-hop artist Chris Brown. Since the early months of 2009, young people across the country had been watching news stories on television and viewing internet stories about the violent beating. Both singers are quite

popular among tweens (youth ages 10-12) and teens. At one point after the beating, it was rumored that Rihanna had forgiven Brown and was taking him back into her life.

The researcher was advised that many in the domestic violence support community felt this action could potentially send the wrong signal to young women in similar situations. Therefore, the decision was made during the meeting to proceed with a targeted workshop on teen dating violence.

Scheduling came next. The consensus of those in the planning meeting was to first implement the workshop targeted to leaders. With that in mind, a June 2009 date was set. Because a large venue was needed, the location would be New Vision of Faith Ministries (NVOF), a larger church located on Chicago's south side and the home base of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFF).

At the time of the meeting, the researcher was serving on the planning committee for the Fellowship's upcoming youth conference. The conference, themed "Youth Glorifying God" (mind, soul, body and spirit), was scheduled to take place the last weekend in August 2009 at the NVOF location. Because of the holistic theme, it was determined that an informational discussion about teen dating violence could work well within the framework of the conference.

It must be noted here that a key element in the planning was the cooperation of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship churches under the leadership of Apostle Kevin E. Dean, who has also worked with the writer as one of her Professional Associates. With his endorsement of the project to the Fellowship leadership, the researcher was assured of cooperation and support.

As previously stated in this paper, the writer's home church of Greater Faith Ministries International (GFMI) has been an active member of the Fellowship for the past three years. Currently there are seven churches within the Fellowship—with total congregational memberships in the several hundreds. Workshops would be marketed to both the leadership and memberships of the Fellowship.

The following dates, times and locations were established with the expert assistance of the Chicago Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit:

- a. Leadership Workshop – Saturday, June 20, 2009, 9 A.M., New Vision of Faith, 447 W. 120th Street.
- b. Youth Workshop – Saturday, August 21, 2009, 9 A.M., New Vision of Faith, 447 W. 120th Street.

Grateful for the cooperation of the CPD, the researcher left the meeting with the audiences and the venues for these two workshops decided. The next challenge was to plan a third workshop that would be directed to the broader church community. Once again, the researcher networked among peers in the ministry and friends within the non-profit world. That networking process led her to the Director of the John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County—Connections for Abused Women and their Children program. Through a series of telephone conference calls and emails, a third workshop was finally planned and targeted to the general church community. This workshop was to be similar to the one planned for leadership in that it would be informational and educational. Like the other two, it would be held in the church.

A community workshop was scheduled for Saturday, October 17, 2009, 11 A.M., at Greater Faith Ministries International, 513 E. 75th Street in Chicago.

Marketing

Flyers were developed to market the workshops. Mass emails to churches within the New Vision of Faith Fellowship, church bulletins and word of mouth also were part of the marketing strategy.

In addition, informational flyers announcing the third workshop were left in the 6th Ward Alderman Fredrenna Lyle's office and that of Congressman Bobby Rush. Both of these offices are located in the neighborhood surrounding the researcher's home church.

Project Sites

As previously stated, New Vision of Faith Ministries (NVOF) served as the location of the first two workshops. NVOF offered a more spacious venue, including a large sanctuary holding approximately 400 people and a comfortable, large fellowship hall. Also as previously noted, another deciding factor for the NVOF location was that it serves as a central meeting place for all of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFF) churches. The researcher was hoping to pull a large percentage of the workshops' audience from fellowship churches.

NVOF is located on Chicago's south side in the Roseland community. Most churches in Chicago are not considered community churches—meaning that most attendees are not necessarily from the neighborhood in which the church building is located. Typically, most people's average drive to church is 10-20 minutes. The

researcher assumed that the majority of the invitees would come from Fellowship churches and would therefore be familiar with the location.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Workshop One

The unstated intents in conducting the workshops in the NVOF church setting were:

- a. to begin the process of learning about the pervasiveness of sexual and domestic violence within the church, and
- b. to create an environment conducive to open and honest conversations on this difficult subject.

Her hope was that if someone in the audience needed help, that person would reach out for help and find needed resources to begin the journey toward healing. This aspect is discussed further in Chapter Six.

The journey to healing and understanding began on Saturday, June 20, 2009. The fellowship hall of New Vision of Faith Ministries was transformed into a study hall of sorts with the room set up classroom style. Informational folders were laid at each place setting. As detailed in Chapter Four, the workshop was presented by the Chicago Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit, headed by Sgt. Maude Noflin. A special guest presenter—Joyce Calvin of the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network—was also in attendance. The walls of the room were lined with resource tables featuring a wide

variety of information on sexual and domestic violence. Seated at the tables were experts explaining the literature and services offered.

Population Description

Twenty people were in attendance. Most represented the leadership of the seven Fellowship churches—pastors, ministerial staff, and lay leaders. There was one guest from Trinity United Church of Christ representing its domestic violence ministry. She had been invited by a member of the Fellowship. Attendees were handed pre-workshop surveys and asked to complete them before the meeting commenced. To keep the atmosphere relaxed and informal, coffee, donuts, and muffins were available and easily accessible on the counter of the nearby kitchen in the fellowship hall.

Pre Workshop Survey Results

To reiterate, the purpose of this first workshop was to educate and inform leaders within the church of the horror that is domestic violence. A pre-workshop survey was distributed to ascertain the attendees' understanding of the subject prior to the presentation. Answer options for each question were in *a,b,c,d,e...* format.

A summary of attendee responses on the pre-workshop survey follows:

Question: What is domestic violence?

Answer: 92% of respondents answered (e) A & D.

A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Question: Who are the victims of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

95 percent of victims are women; children are often involved; men are sometimes involved.

Question: How prevalent is domestic violence?

Answer: 92% of respondents answered (d) All of the above

According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; according to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; one in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Question: What are the types of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (f) All of the above.

Physical assault; sexual assault; psychological assault, attacks against property and pets; economic/financial control.

Question: How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

Physical evidence including frequent bruises, broken bones, etc.; emotional abuse including harassment, stalking, excessively possessive, controlling or jealous behavior; isolation of victim.

Question: Who are batterers?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Batterers come from all class backgrounds, races, and religions; batterers are unemployed; batterers are employed; batterers are blue-collar; batterers are professionals; batterers are Christians; batterers are non-Christians.

Question: What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Listen and believe the victim; tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life; tell her she is not alone and that help is available; let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; seek expert assistance; consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.

Workshop Proceedings

After some preliminary announcements, the meeting was opened with prayer by the researcher, after which the purpose of the meeting/workshop was explained. Sgt. Maude Noflin was then introduced. Noflin explained that the overarching goal of the workshop was to support the church by providing information on the subject of domestic

violence. She admitted that some of the information might be disturbing, but all of it was necessary for this audience of leaders (pastors, etc.) to gain understanding into the subject. For that reason, she added, a substantial amount of information would be presented in the two hours allotted for the workshop—and she and her staff would be available for further discussions after the workshop concluded. Specifically, Noflin noted that the workshop would explain and bring clarity to questions like:

- What domestic violence is and what it is not
- What the cycle of domestic violence is
- What is mandated reporting— in particular, who are mandated reporters
- What is the church obligated to do—steps that should be taken, and resources that are available

Attendees were encouraged to review the resource tables and pay particular attention to the reference piece entitled *Breaking the Silence*, which featured stories of women who died as a result of domestic violence. These women were described by Noflin as those who did not break the silence of domestic abuse.

Detective Shawn Kennedy, a nineteen-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, was then introduced by Noflin. He began his presentation by defining domestic violence as:

A pattern of physical and psychological abuse, threats, intimidation and isolation or economic coercion used by one person to exert power and control over an intimate partner or family member.

According to Kennedy, domestic violence is characterized by the abuser's sense of entitlement. Because the presentation was targeted to church leaders, and in order to give as complete an understanding of the issue as possible, Kennedy's presentation covered causes of domestic violence, the dynamics of domestic violence, the effects of

domestic violence, and tactics used on victims. Following are salient points of his presentation. Additional detail is covered in Attachment A.

- Domestic violence is a learned behavior
- It is not caused by
 - Substance Abuse
 - Mental Illness
 - Impulse Control Disorder
 - Stress
 - Behavior of the victim or problems in the relationship
- Domestic Violence cuts across all socio-economic groups
 - Every racial and ethnic group
 - Every economic group
 - Every occupation
 - Heterosexual and same-sex relationships
- Effects on victims
 - Living in fear
 - Sense of helplessness about the situation, feeling trapped, isolated and alone
 - Numbness
 - Low self-esteem
 - Denial of the seriousness of the abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Abusing dependencies/neglect
 - Threats/intimidation
 - Ridiculing values/spirituality
 - Emotional abuse
 - Using family members
 - Isolation
 - Using privilege
 - Financial exploitation
 - Self blame and feelings of guilt
 - Feelings of anger
 - Depression and suicidal thoughts
 - Physical problems and illnesses related to injuries or stress
- Traumatic stress symptoms
 - Flashbacks
 - Intrusive thoughts of violent events
 - Exaggerated startle response
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Difficulty concentrating
- Tactics used by abusive family members

- Power and control
- Using coercion and threats
- Using economic abuse
- Using male privilege
- Using children
- Minimizing, denying and blaming
- Using isolation
- Using emotional abuse
- Using intimidation

Kennedy also debunked popular myths related to domestic violence. These include:

- Domestic violence is a private family matter.
Domestic violence—also called spouse abuse, battering, family violence, abuse and wife beating—is not just a family problem. It is a crime with serious repercussions.
- The violence isn't really serious.
Domestic violence can involve threats, pushing, punching, slapping, choking, sexual assault, and assault with weapons. It is rarely a one-time occurrence and usually escalates in frequency and severity over time. Any act of domestic violence is something to take seriously.
- Victims provoke their partner's violence.
Victims never control a batterer's use of violence. Victims are not to blame nor do they ever deserve such abuse. Whatever problems exist in a relationship, the use of violence is never justified or acceptable.
- No one would beat their pregnant wife or girlfriend.
Domestic violence often begins or escalates during pregnancy. Testimony before Congress indicated that 50 percent of abusive husbands batter their pregnant wives. Other statistics show that between 25 percent and 40 percent of battered women were assaulted while pregnant.
- Domestic violence committed by women against men is equivalent to the domestic violence men commit against women.
Although some women do commit violent acts against men, women rarely subject men to the coercive control, physical intimidation, chronic fear, isolation, entrapment, rape, and stalking which are hallmarks of battering.
- Domestic violence doesn't happen in my neighborhood.
Domestic violence occurs among all ages, races, and religions. It happens to people of all educational and income levels. It happens in heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender relationships. It happens everywhere.
- Batterers are mentally ill.
Battering is a learned behavior, not a mental illness. Abusers' experiences as children and the messages they get from society in general tell them that violence is an effective means to achieve power and control over their partners. Batterers are accountable for their actions.
- Drug and alcohol abuse causes domestic violence.

Batterers frequently make excuses for their violence, claiming loss of control due to alcohol or drug use, or extreme stress. Although drug and alcohol abuse may intensify existing violent behavior, it does not cause domestic violence.

- It is easy for a victim to leave their abuser.¹
Among the many, many reasons why it is difficult for a victim to leave: victims may not know about available resources to assist them; financial dependence may keep some tied to an abusive partner; social and justice systems may have been unresponsive, insensitive, or ineffective in the past; religious, cultural, or family pressures may make them believe it is their duty to keep their marriage together at all costs; emotional ties to their partner may still be strong, supporting their hope that the violence will end. For most, the decision to end a relationship is not an easy one.

Next, Officer Claretha Cross presented some warning signs of domestic abuse that pastors and other church leaders need to look for:

- A member consistently showing up late for or missing religious meetings, services or events.
- A member regularly dressing inappropriately for the weather such as wearing turtlenecks in the summer and sunglasses indoors.
- A member frequently having “accidents” that cause bruises or broken bones.
- A member appearing depressed, tired, overly stressed, and/or anxious especially around their partner.

Cross also presented warning signs that may indicate an individual is a perpetrator of domestic violence:

- An individual who consistently criticizes and makes demeaning comments about their partner.
- An individual who loses their temper and acts abusively toward other members of the congregation.
- An individual who consistently prevents their partner from participating in religious meetings and social events.
- An individual who is overly controlling of their partner
- An individual who openly talks about orders of protection and/or court dates.

¹ Information obtained from the Centralized Training Institute, Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women’s Network.

To close their part of the presentation, the police department representatives explained what the church can do in response to family violence. Among the suggestions:

- Invite family violence prevention advocates in to teach how to detect cases of abuses. When you know or suspect abuse or neglect, report it to the proper authorities.
- Provide counsel and support to the abused. It is important that clergy, who may not have experience with abuse cases, know community services to which victims may be referred for help.
- Do not attempt to counsel a couple together when there is violence in the relationship.
- Establish or sponsor a self-help group for families involved in child abuse.
- Establish or sponsor a self-help group for adults who were sexually abused as children.
- Establish or expand the church's family ministries program to include parenting classes, a family support network, and other services as needed and as feasible. It may also be helpful if the church affirms a broader concept of family than that of the traditional nuclear family. If factors prohibit the church from establishing some needed service, join with other churches in offering the service.
- Establish a safe house where women and children can seek refuge in time of crisis. Various community groups coordinate safe house programs and will train and prepare the church to provide the service.
- Encourage clergy and laypeople to secure more in-depth training to be able to minister to abused people, many of whom have theological questions and doubts about their faith.
- Have available at the church public service pamphlets and brochures about the various types of family violence and services to those involved in the violence. Post crisis numbers on the church bulletin board.
- During National Domestic Violence Week in October, select family violence prevention as a sermon topic.
- Stage a theater production that dramatizes the issues involved in family violence. Follow the presentation with an audience discussion.
- Find out what your state is doing to respond to family violence. Determine where gaps exist in preventive services and support legislation that provides needed services.
- Promote passage of legislation in regard to family violence.
- Offer seminars on the legal alternatives for abused spouses and family members and for elderly abused people.
- Establish a voluntary assistance program or volunteer with a community program to provide services for the elderly and relief for people who care for the elderly.

At the conclusion of the presentation by the Chicago Police Department, Joyce Calvin of the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network (CMBWN) was introduced. She presented a video that had been produced by CMBWN. It was a compilation of four women's stories. The women crossed racial, ethnic, and age groups. They told stories of domestic and sexual abuse and ultimately survival. The video put a face on abuse, and the stories added validity and truth to all that had been discussed during the workshop.

Post-Workshop Survey

A post-workshop survey was conducted to ascertain whether any change had occurred in the level of attendees' understanding of the subject. The post-workshop survey contained the same information as the pre-workshop survey. Only the paper color was different. A summary of attendee responses to questions on the post-workshop survey follows.

Question: What is domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (e) A & D.

A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Question: Who are the victims of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

95 percent of victims are women; children are often involved; men are sometimes involved.

Question: How prevalent is domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; according to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; one in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Question: What are the types of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (f) All of the above.

Physical assault; sexual assault; psychological assault, attacks against property and pets; economic/financial control.

Question: How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

Answer: 100 % of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

Physical evidence including frequent bruises, broken bones, etc.; emotional abuse including harassment, stalking, excessively possessive, controlling or jealous behavior; isolation of victim.

Question: Who are batterers?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Batterers come from all class backgrounds, races, and religions; batterers are unemployed; batterers are employed; batterers are blue-collar; batterers are professionals; batterers are Christians; batterers are non-Christians.

Question: What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Answer: 80% of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Listen and believe the victim; tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life; tell her she is not alone and that help is available; let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; seek expert assistance; consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.

Changes: Pre- to Post-Workshop Survey

Questions one and three saw a percentage increase in the level of correct responses. In response to the question: What is domestic violence?, 92% of respondents to the pre-workshop survey indicated that domestic violence is: *A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.* On the post workshop survey, 100% of respondents chose the above stated answer—an 8% increase over the pre-workshop survey.

In response to the question: How prevalent is domestic violence?, 92% of respondents to the pre-workshop survey indicated that: *According to surveys from the*

U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; according to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; one in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. On the post-workshop survey, 100% of respondents chose the above stated answer—an 8 percent increase.

In response to the question: What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?, 100% of respondents to the pre-workshop survey answered the question in the following manner: *Listen and believe the victim; tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life; tell her she is not alone and that help is available; let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; seek expert assistance; consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.* However, only 80% of respondents to the post-workshop survey chose the above answer to the question.

This represents a 20% decline (from 100% to 80%). The researcher is not sure why there was this level of change. This is a pivotal question on the survey for someone in leadership because it gets to the crux of the matter—how will pastors/church leaders use the information they have learned about domestic violence.

For this reason, the researcher designed a post-session survey which was disseminated during a Fellowship pastors' meeting a few weeks after the workshop. The purpose of the survey was to assess whether or not the workshop had spurred church leaders to move toward addressing the issue of domestic violence by making information and/or resources easily accessible to their members. A summary of findings follows:

Based on the information gleaned from that workshop, what can/will you do?

Collect material on domestic violence and create a resource table for the dissemination of information. () yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Place information regarding domestic violence on your church bulletin board.

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Speak out on domestic violence from the pulpit

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Place short articles pertaining to domestic violence in the church bulletin.

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Place information and handouts in the women's restroom?

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you begun educating your teens/young adults about dating violence?

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you become more adept at discerning potential domestic violence situations within your congregation?

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you become more aware of domestic violence in the news?

() yes () no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you or members of your ministerial staff sought partnerships with local agencies serving victims of domestic violence?

() yes () no

One respondent indicated "Yes." All others responded "No."

Five of seven Fellowship pastors answered the post-session survey. The impact of change could be significant over time. Although there are no mega churches within the Fellowship, each pastor is responsible for a large number of congregants. It is hoped that through the implementation of small changes, these pastors will *begin* the process of

turning their church communities into places where healing is not only sought, but found for those whose lives have been impacted by sexual and domestic violence.

Workshop Two

The second workshop was held on Saturday, August 21, 2009. The workshop took place in conjunction with the New Vision of Faith Fellowship's Youth Conference, themed "Youth Glorifying God." The conference featured a weekend of high praise and information designed to educate, inform and empower young people (11-18)—both spiritually through worship services on Friday and Sunday evenings, and socially through pragmatic workshops on teen dating violence presented on Saturday. Approximately forty young people were in attendance.

Pre-Workshop Survey

The young people were asked to complete a pre-workshop survey in order to ascertain their level of understanding on the subject of dating violence, both coming into the workshop (pre) and after being presented with a day's worth of material on dating violence (post). Each youth was asked to complete the survey to the best of their ability. The survey form was prepared by the Chicago Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit. Following are findings from the pre-workshop survey:

Question: Domestic/dating violence is when your boyfriend/girlfriend....

Answer: The respondents were almost evenly split between answers All of the above, and none of the above—46% and 40% respectively.

Makes you feel bad about yourself, tries to control you with threats, physical abuse and possessiveness.

Question: Females are also able to abuse their partners.

Answer: The majority of respondents (80%) replied: *True*

Question: Even though my partner pushes me around, he/she does it because they love me.

Answer: The majority of respondents (73%) replied: *False*.

Question: If my partner buys me a cell phone and calls me a lot that means he really loves me.

Answer: The majority of respondents (73%) replied: *False*

Question: People beat up their partners because they...

Answer: The majority of respondents (53%) replied: All of the above
Believe it's their right, choose to not control their feelings, want to feel secure by gaining control.

Question: Fighting and abuse usually happens with...

Answer: All of the respondents (100%) replied: All of the above
Rich couples, poor couples, gay couples.

Question: When a friend tells you they are being abused, you should...

Answer: The majority of respondents (53%) replied: Answers 1, 2 & 3
Listen and believe them; tell them it is not their fault; offer to get help with them.

Question: Using drugs or alcohol is a cause of dating violence:

Answer: The majority of respondents (67%) replied: *True*.

Question: Victims sometimes find it hard to leave their abusers because of ...

Answer: The majority of respondents (60%) replied: All of the above
Fear, shame, promises of change, love.

Question: Teenagers will usually tell someone that they are being abused

Answer: The majority of respondents (73%) replied: *False*.

Question: Verbal abuse can involve...

Answer: The majority of respondents (46%) replied: All of the above
Playing mind games; name calling; making the partner feel guilty; slapping, hitting.

Interestingly: 12% responded-- *Playing mind games*; 12% responded-- *Name calling*; 12% responded-- *Making the partner feel guilty*, and 12% responded -- *Answers 1,2 & 3.*

Question: The abuse is not the victim's fault.

Answer: The majority of respondents (60%) replied: *True*.

Workshop Proceedings

In order to keep the young people interested and engaged, Saturday's session was segmented in the following manner:

- Opening Plenary Session
- Gender-specific Workshops
- Lunch
- A 45-minute Play – The Yellow Dress
- Closing Plenary – Who U Iz?

After the opening plenary in which the focus of the day was discussed, the young people were separated by gender—the boys going to one workshop area and the girls going to another workshop area. Each group was essentially presented the same material.

The material for the workshops was provided by the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) Domestic Violence Unit. Unfortunately, scheduling challenges prevented the unit from direct participation. The researcher was able to get the presentation material from CPD well in advance of the workshop. With that material in hand, Apostle Kevin Dean of New Vision of Faith Ministries and Pastor Hazel King of Greater Faith Ministries were able to put together the presentations and facilitate the workshops for the boys and girls.

Engaging the youth at their own level was an important component of the gender-targeted workshops. For that reason, part of each workshop was spent in a brief time to get to know one another. In addition, the presenters wanted to be certain that as the facts were being presented about dating violence, the youth were involved in the discussion—sharing experiences and concerns as appropriate. The workshops were called the ABC's of Teen Dating Violence and for each point presented, the teens were asked how they felt

about it. From these conversations the facilitators were able to talk about healthy and unhealthy dating behaviors, the warning signs of abusive behavior, as well as some of the stereotypes young people have when going into dating relationships. Following are the general points covered in the presentation:

The ABC's of Teen Dating Violence

- Anyone can be a victim of teen dating violence
- Be safe.
- Control.
- Dating violence is a consistent pattern of verbal or emotional abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse.
- Emotional abuse can be more serious than physical abuse
- Family and friends can help you.
- Get help.
- Help your friends who may be victims.
- Intervention and prevention begin with you.
- Judges know the problems of dating violence.
- Kicking, hitting, and punching are types of physical abuse.
- Love should be special.
- Murder is the ultimate horror of dating violence.
- No one likes being hit.
- Orders of protection tell the abusers what they can and cannot do.
- Physical abuse doesn't always leave bruises, but it always leaves scars.
- Qualified counselors are available to help teen dating violence victims 24 hours a day.
- Read and remember everything you can about dating violence.
- Sexual abuse can be anything from ruining your reputation, to touching inappropriately, to rape.
- Tell.
- Understand that you are not alone.
- Victory is in becoming a survivor.
- Winning the battle against teen dating violence is everyone's job.
- X-rays don't show all the hurt.
- Yearly, about 25% of all teens are dating violence victims.
- Zero tolerance is the only acceptable level of teen dating violence.²

² The ABC's of Teen Dating Violence Information from the Clerk of Circuit Court Domestic Violence Program

After lunch, the young people were assembled in the church sanctuary where the play, *The Yellow Dress*, was presented. This dramatic one-woman play told the story of a teenage girl who is killed by her boyfriend on prom night as a result of dating violence. She was wearing a *yellow* dress. The actress tells her story in the first person and describes how her relationship with her boyfriend began wonderfully and ended disastrously.

When the play concluded, a program facilitator led a lively discussion about the good and bad of dating relationships. The audience of young people was clearly moved by the play, and conversation freely flowed. In part, the post-play conversation focused on:

- Recognizing the early warning signs of abuse.
- Learning how to help friends/family members who are victims or perpetrators of abuse.
- Understanding the cycle of abuse.
- Accessing and utilizing community resources.

Post-Workshop Survey

The post-workshop survey was given after all sessions were completed, including the ABC's of Teen Violence, the play—*The Yellow Dress*, and the closing plenary—

Who U Iz. Following are the results:

Question: Domestic /dating violence is when your boyfriend/girlfriend....

Answer: The majority of respondents (69%) replied: *All of the above Makes you feel bad about yourself, tries to control you with threats, physical abuse and possessiveness.*

This was a 23% increase from the pre-workshop survey where there was an almost even split between answers *all of the above*, and *none of the above*.

Question: Females are also able to abuse their partners.

Answer: The majority of respondents (68%) replied: *True*.

This was a 12% decline from the pre-workshop survey where 80% of respondents answered *True* to the question.

Question: Even though my partner pushes me around, he/she does it because they love me.

Answer: The majority of respondents (87%) replied *False*.

This was a 14% increase from the pre-workshop survey where 73% of respondents chose that answer.

Question: If my partner buys me a cell phone and calls me a lot that means he really loves me.

Answer: The majority of respondents (87.5%) replied: *False*.

This was a 14.5% increase from the pre-workshop survey where 73% of respondents chose that answer.

Question: People beat up their partners because they...

Answer: The majority of respondents (55%) replied: All of the above *Believe it's their right, choose to not control their feelings, want to feel secure by gaining control.*

This was a 2% increase from the pre-workshop survey where 53% of the respondents chose that answer.

Question: Fighting and abuse usually happens with...

Answer: The majority of respondents (94%) replied: All of the above *Rich couples, poor couples, gay couples.*

This was a 6% decline from the pre-workshop survey where all of the respondents chose that answer.

Question: When a friend tells you they are being abused, you should...

Answer: The majority of respondents (55%) replied: Answers 1, 2 & 3 *Listen and believe them; tell them it is not their fault; offer to get help with them.*

This was a 2% increase from the pre-workshop survey where 53% of respondents chose that answer.

Question: Using drugs or alcohol is a cause of dating violence:

Answer: The respondents were evenly split (53% and 47%) between answers *True* and *False*.

This was a 14% decrease from the pre-workshop survey where 67% responded *True*.

Question: Victims sometimes find it hard to leave their abusers because of ...

Answer: The majority of respondents (47%) replied: All of the above *Fear, shame, promises of change, love.*

This was a 13% decrease from the pre-workshop survey where 60% of respondents chose that answer.

Question: Teenagers will usually tell someone that they are being abused

Answer: The majority of respondents (77%) replied: *False*

This was a 4% increase from the pre-workshop survey where 73% of respondents chose that answer.

Question: Verbal abuse can involve...

Answer: The majority of respondents (45%) replied: All of the above *Playing mind games Name calling; Making the partner feel guilty; Slapping, Hitting.*

There was a small increase (1%) from the pre-workshop survey. Interestingly, 22% checked *Name Calling*, and 25% checked *Answers 1,2,3—Playing mind games; Name calling, Making the partner feel guilty*

Question: The abuse is not the victim's fault.

Answer: The majority of respondents (58%) replied: *True*

There was a 2% decline from the pre-workshop survey where 60% of respondents answered the question in the affirmative.

Thoughts on Survey Results

The play, *The Yellow Dress*, was emotionally moving to all who watched the dramatization. It was presented close to the end of the day's event (right before the closing plenary). The researcher has chosen to look at some of the questions from the post-workshop survey from the standpoint of the viewing of the play. Could it have influenced the response to some of the questions? With this in mind, two questions that showed the highest gains are highlighted below, along with two others that showed the largest decline from similar answers given on the pre-workshop survey.

- In answer to the question: Domestic/dating violence is when your boyfriend/girlfriend... The majority of respondents (69%) replied: All of the above – *Makes you feel bad about yourself, tries to control you with threats, physical abuse and possessiveness.* 46% of respondents chose this answer on the pre-workshop survey. The play, *The Yellow Dress*, brought this point to the forefront as the actress spoke emotionally about how her boyfriend tried to control and or influence her life—even limiting access to other friends in her life. The actress told about the relationship with the boyfriend in great detail. His controlling actions lowered her sense of self worth. She simply wanted to please him, and she struggled to do everything his way.
- In answer to the question: Even though my partner pushes me around, he/she does it because they love me... The majority of respondents (87%) replied: *False*. Once again, the play was a dramatic presentation

illustrating a young man's desire to control his girlfriend by controlling her every move. The young woman talked about how dating violence started off with simple pushing/shoving and escalated to hitting. It concluded with the violent act that ended her life. Along the way, the actress showed how she was confused and believed her boyfriend's protestations of love. The play depicted how the young woman felt trapped in the relationship, but wanted to believe that there was love underlying her boyfriend's behavior.

- In answer to the question: Females are also able to abuse their partners... The 68% of respondents answered: *True*—a 13% decline from the pre-workshop survey. The play depicted abuse only from the vantage point of the male as the perpetrator of the abuse. It is possible that some of the young people changed their perception of females as potential abusers after having watched the play.
- In answer to the question: Victims sometimes find it hard to leave their abusers because of ... The majority of respondents (47%) replied: All of the above – *Fear, Shame, Promises of change, Love*. This was a 13% decrease from the pre-workshop survey where 60% of respondents chose that answer. The researcher wonders if the play was an influencer since 29% responded *Fear*, and 16% responded *Love* on the post workshop survey. The issue of *fear* of the beloved and what *true love is* were two of the play's strongest and most resounding themes.

Although no definitive conclusions can be drawn from these responses, the researcher includes comments written by some of the teens in order to highlight what some were thinking at the end of the day. It is important to note that only the girls provided written comments. The boys were not as vocal during the session and none of the boys provided comments in written form. The researcher can only speculate the reason for the silence of the boys. As a mother of two sons, the researcher understands that boys are not typically as vocal in sharing their feelings as girls are.

Comments (in their own words)

Girl – Some teens think it's love . . . mostly it's the girls that thinks [sic] that. But it's really not! My best friend's sister died of that! I feel that most people should talk to someone about lover abuse.

Girl – I think that you should not have to fight in order to get in a relationship.

Girl – I think that all teenagers should not be abused because all teenagers are not bad.

Girl – The reason I say that teen dating abusive (sic) is not right because any way it goes, a male should never hit a female, but they do it anyway because they feel they are in control.

Girl – That really helped me open up because some of that stuff helped me get things off my chest. Thanks a lot.

Girl – Rickie should not have beat the girl like he did and killed her. (referencing the play)

Girl – I learned that I'm the prize and never let no man control you or get in the car and he was furious, and when it gets physical, girls should quit (him) because there is someone better.

Girl – I have a friend that it happened to. But he told me everything. I tried to make him feel better, but my best friend was very sad because his sister died over that!

Girl – That really helped me out – (the day was) more about safety.

Workshop Three

The third workshop was targeted to the general church community. Like the first workshop, the purpose of this third and final workshop was to educate and inform the church about domestic violence. The workshop was presented at Greater Faith Ministries International (GFMI), the researcher's home church,

Workshop Population

Marketing included flyers to the fellowship churches, community businesses, the Greater Grand Crossing community through the alderman's office; notices in the church bulletin, and broadcast emails. Unfortunately, with less than a dozen persons in attendance, the turnout was disappointingly small. Most were members of Greater Faith Ministries.

Pre-Workshop Survey

As with the other workshops, a pre-workshop survey was distributed to ascertain the attendees' understanding of the subject prior to the presentation. The researcher used the same survey as was used for Workshop One. A summary of attendee answers on the pre-workshop survey follows.

Question: What is domestic violence?

Answer: 83% of respondents answered (e) A and D.

A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Question: Who are the victims of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

95 percent of victims are women; Children are often involved; Men are sometimes involved.

Question: How prevalent is domestic violence?

Answer: 83% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; according to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; one in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Question: What are the types of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (f) All of the above.

Physical assault; sexual assault; Psychological assault attacks against property and pets; Economic/financial control.

Question: How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above.

Physical evidence including frequent bruises, broken bones, etc.; Emotional abuse including harassment, Stalking, excessively possessive, controlling or jealous behavior; Isolation of victim.

Question: Who are batterers?

Answer: 100 % of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Batterers come from all class backgrounds, races, and religions; batterers are unemployed; Batterers are employed; Batterers are blue-collar; Batterers are professionals; batterers are Christians; Batterers are non-Christians.

Question: What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Answer: 100 % of respondents answered (h) All of the above.

Listen and believe the victim; Tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life; Tell her she is not alone and that help is available; Let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; Seek expert assistance; Consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.

Workshop Proceedings

The workshop was held on Saturday, October 17, 2009 from 11 A.M.. to 1 P.M. It was facilitated by Jacqueline Appleton-Miller, Training and Outreach Coordinator, Stroger Hospital Crisis Intervention Project. The facilitator started the session by discussing a few case histories. Other key points covered in the workshop included a

discussion of religious beliefs or religious institutions and the positive/negative impact such belief systems can have on domestic violence:

- 54% of the adult population in the U.S. reside in a household where either they themselves or someone else is a member of, or affiliated with, a place of worship.
- The proportion of adults who do not subscribe to any religious identification has grown from 2001.
- The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) sought to determine whether, and to what extent, adults in the U.S. consider their outlook on life to be essentially religious or secular. In all, 75% described their outlook as religious or somewhat religious, while 16% described their outlook as secular or somewhat secular. 1% said they were a little of both, 2% were unsure, and 5% refused to answer the question.
- Religious affiliations can affect
 - Gender roles
 - Image
 - Prestige/rulership
 - Communication including who speaks to whom and when
 - Family Relationships
- Gender roles, including what is appropriate for men and women and who cares for the children and keeps the house clean, is one to be obedient and/or subservient to the other.
- Religious values and characteristics
 - Respect (highly valued, based on status, given to parents, elders, teachers, authority figures)
 - Sense of community (denomination rules and principles takes priority over the individual)
 - Religion (influences family life and community affairs; it gives spiritual meaning to culture)
 - Many people are born and rooted into these customs, traditions, and religions
 - These values and characteristics may present some challenges when dealing with abuse. These may also hinder disclosure of abuses.
 - Biblical records of abuse including stories of violence against women and children are so common that we rarely notice them, even in the Bible. These stories have been ignored, forgotten or even worse, used to suggest that such abuse is condoned by God.
- Religious aspect of the problem

- Reinforcing the need for reconciliation often causes victims to feel compelled to stay in abusive relationships. “Submit” or “turn the other cheek.” (Christianity)
- Pressured not to bring shame to their community by revealing the abuse in their marriage, or that it is their responsibility to maintain shalom bayit—peace in the home. (Jewish)
- Men are the protectors and maintainers of women. Women are to be devoutly obedient, and to guard their chastity in the husband’s absence, their husband’s property, etc. (Islam)
- Victims of abuse often feel abandoned by God
- Forgiveness/Reconciliation
- Suffering and Sacrifice
- Repentance
- Court/Legal System

- Common Ground amongst faiths and religious beliefs
 - Teaching social justice
 - Way of life
 - Scripture is often misinterpreted
 - Love, peace, unity, and sacredness of marriage
 - Commitment, faithfulness to God
 - Needs leadership development

- Help-seeking barriers
 - Lack of religious and culturally compatible professional services
 - Lack of trust/adversarial relationships
 - Religious and cultural beliefs, guilt, self-blame, family and social pressures make abused women go back to their abusers.
 - Language, financial, employment status, fear of losing children, lack of affordable housing, fear of rejection
 - Whatever one’s religious or ethnic tradition, holidays of Ramadan, Solstice, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa or Lunar New Year can be times of despair, sadness, and grief.
 - These times often involve family, friends and traditions.
 - Many women have strong religious backgrounds dating back to their childhood.
 - Many believe that their life is the way God wants it and that the power to correct or change it is not in their hands.
 - There are often challenges and pressures related to birth control, contraceptives, and abortion related to religious doctrine.
 - Suffering—many abused women feel that suffering is sent to try their faith and to keep them strong.
 - Forgiveness—religious teachings emphasize that if you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven.

- Many religions can be used to support both liberation from abuse AND control of a husband over his wife, depending on how the religious text is interpreted. An abuser may quote religious text to justify abuse. A victim may be told that she is responsible for keeping the family together and may fear being cast out from her community if she separates or divorces her husband
- Faith-Support Statements
 - Use supportive faith statements that address the victim's safety, well-being and empowerment.
 - A victim may say, "I believe that God never sends us anything we can't handle." This statement can be a roadblock as it implies that God has sent the abuse. On the other hand, it may imply that God knows this person has the resources for dealing with the abusive situation. Affirm this part of the statement that "If God sent the abuse, then God has also sent the tools and resources for dealing with it. Let's name some of the resources you think God has given you."
 - Make statements like "I am confident that God does not want you to suffer this way." This may allow you to be heard as offering possibilities to the victim, rather than blaming or shaming them for believing the wrong thing.

Post-Workshop Survey

A post-workshop survey was given to ascertain whether any change had occurred in the level of attendee understanding of the subject. The post-workshop survey contained the same information as the pre-workshop survey; only the paper color was different. A summary of attendee answers to questions on the post-workshop survey follows.

Question: What is domestic violence?

Answer: 80% of respondents answered (e) A & D, a slight decline (3%) from the pre-workshop survey.

A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Question: Who are the victims of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above (same as pre-workshop response).

95 % of victims are women; Children are often involved; Men are sometimes involved.

Question: How prevalent is domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above. This represents a 17% increase from the response given on the pre-workshop survey.

According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; According to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; One in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Question: What are the types of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (f) All of the above (same as pre-workshop response).

Physical assault; sexual assault; Psychological assault, attacks against property and pets; Economic/financial control.

Question: How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above (same as pre-workshop response).

Physical evidence including frequent bruises, broken bones, etc.; Emotional abuse including harassment, stalking, excessively possessive, controlling or jealous behavior; Isolation of victim.

Question: Who are batterers?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (h) All of the above (same as pre-workshop response).

Batterers come from all class backgrounds, races, and religions; Batterers are unemployed; Batterers are employed; Batterers are blue-collar; Batterers are professionals; Batterers are Christians; Batterers are non-Christians.

Question: What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (h) All of the above (same as pre-workshop response).

Listen and believe the victim; tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life; tell her she is not alone and that help is available; Let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; seek expert assistance; Consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.

Thoughts on Survey Results

The purpose of this workshop was to inform, educate, and enlighten the attendees relative to the issue of domestic violence. With two exceptions, responses to the post-workshop survey were exactly the same as in the pre-workshop survey. Based on the responses to the surveys, it can be concluded that participants' basic knowledge of the subject did not substantially increase or decrease. As previously noted, this workshop was held at the researcher's home church. The majority of the attendees of this workshop were the researcher's context associates. Their close affiliation with the researcher during the course of this project may be the reason why the survey results indicated minimal change.

Even so, it is important to look at the response to the post workshop survey question: *How prevalent is domestic violence?* There was a 17% increase in the level of knowledge and understanding of the issue—from 83% to 100%.

Answer: 100% of respondents answered (d) All of the above. This represents a 17% increase from the response given on the pre-workshop survey. *According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages; According to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic violence related calls for service are reported each month; One in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.*

Workshop Conversations and Observations

The researcher used participant observation as an indicator of engagement in the workshop. On the whole, the attendees were actively engaged in workshop discussions and even challenged the researcher on issues relative to what the church can do to be proactive and help victims of domestic violence.

For example, at one point during the workshop one of the attendees indicated that Greater Faith Ministries was interested in someday opening up a shelter for battered women. The facilitator indicated that there were many challenges and restrictions to opening up a shelter in the City of Chicago. A very lively discussion ensued as the attendees were quite vocal in their belief that no matter what the circumstances, the church could find a way to overcome any and all potential hurdles.

Another lengthy discussion concerned the prevalence of angry children who come to church and misbehave or demonstrate aggressive behavior. According to the facilitator, these children are imitating the behavior that they have seen in their homes. The facilitator told her own story of abuse and how she used the church as a place of escape.

There was widespread agreement that there may be children within the GFM family, who, like the facilitator, are looking for someone to truly notice their pain and find ways to investigate their home life. According to the facilitator, “I was looking for a way out, but nobody asked me why I was always hanging out at the church and never wanted to go home.” When the question was asked “*How can we help*,” the facilitator responded, “Ask questions. Sacrifice the time. Take a stand. That’s how you change the paradigm.”

Personal Interviews

During the course of several months as the researcher spoke with her congregation, members of the Fellowship and others about the project, the researcher found that many women were coming forward to tell and share their stories of abuse. Some of these conversations turned into formal interviews. The sharing process was

cathartic for both the individuals involved and the researcher as well. These were healing vignettes. All of these women were believers and members of the church. For the researcher, they became the face of domestic abuse.

Their stories have been included in this paper in order to bring further understanding of the human impact of domestic violence. They are also included to bring additional understanding as to how the church has more often than not been impotent on matters concerning this issue.

These stories focus on real people who have lived or are living in desperate lives—challenging situations in their own home. The researcher is not including these stories as another methodology, but as a means of (a) undergirding the need for proactivity within the church on the issue of sexual and domestic violence, and (b) validating the necessity for the informational workshops to be held within the framework of the church.

Finally, the researcher was interested in pursuing case histories as it was felt that these stories would add a *real life* component to her work. The case histories are told as *HerStories* and are detailed at the end of Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
II Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)

According to Christian tradition, an unnamed Jewish chronicler penned those words spoken by God to King Solomon after the dedication of the great temple in Jerusalem. The word of the Lord came in answer to a prayer that had been prayed by the king. God's promise was that healing would come to the land if certain conditions were met: God's people (the children of Israel) must humble themselves, pray, seek the face of the Lord, and turn from sin. It was a promise made, but Israel continued to sin in the sight of the Lord. By the time the Redeemer—Jesus the Christ—came on the scene, Israel was under the rule of the Roman empire, and the land and people were in disarray.

This writer wonders if the spirit of the Lord is now speaking these words to the church of Jesus Christ. As mentioned earlier in this work, Jeremiah Wright, pastor emeritus Trinity United Church of Christ, delivered a sermon several years ago in which the following words were spoken: "people come to church hurt and in need of healing and they leave the church hurt and in need of healing." This writer shares Pastor Wright's stated belief that the church has not been a place of healing for hurting people. Healing must take many forms because sin takes many forms.

The focus of this work is sexual and domestic violence and the response of the church and faith-based institutions. Having grown up in the Baptist church as the daughter of a Baptist preacher and pastor, this writer knows the traditions of that denomination. She was caught up in them for many, many years. The church the writer grew up in was program directed – men’s day, women’s day, church and pastor’s anniversary, choir musicals, pastor’s aid services, missionary society programs. In comparison, much less time was spent treating the real problems of real human beings through information, resource materials, counseling or outreach.

That was then; this is now. For this writer, the God-inspired recognition of the need for a paradigm shift came over a decade ago. That inspiration began a journey of change and transformation in her. Surprisingly, participation in this doctoral program became an integral part of the journey.

As stated in the writer’s project proposal: Sexual and Domestic Violence is rarely discussed through traditional preaching, teaching, prayer, or pastoral counseling in the church. The current economic and social crisis in this country will quite likely intensify frustration, depression, and rage—leading to violence. If this assumption is correct, the church must be prepared to intervene with tools that support and empower families dealing with serious issues. Families are the foundation of the church, and if it is to build the kingdom of God on earth, the church must create an environment of trust and provide resources for families in trouble. In the book, *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, David Emmanuel Goatley contributed the following:

Samuel Proctor asserts that there are four pressing issues with which all preachers who seek to be relevant must contend: “(1) Is God alive, aware, and active, and is God willing and able to intervene on our behalf? Is the

universe a friendly place? (2) Can this carnal package of drives and urges be controlled, restrained, and reconciled to the will of God? (3) Is a blessed, genuine community possible? (4) Is our space-time frame of reference the only one, or is eternity moving through time?" These are critical questions.

Proctor answers the above questions by affirming that God is present and active in the lives of humanity. Consequently, God enables people to resist evil and pour out compassion upon the victims or survivors of violence. This present God can renew and transform lives, leading to meaningful and moral living. Genuine community that overcomes the pervasive experiences of "noncommunity" with its barriers that separate people is possible. And people can know the eternal quality of life amid the artificiality of our commercialized and consumer-constructed world.¹

As the researcher affirms the words of both Goatley and Proctor, it is clear to her that God can renew and transform lives which will lead to meaningful and moral living. The researcher designed the project to create awareness and to bring conversation into the church about violence in families—specifically, Christian families. This is already beginning to happen within some of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship (NVOFF) churches. For example, the Fellowship is considering co-sponsorship of a marriage retreat. The Fellowship would be partnering with the Chaplain's Unit of the Chicago Police Department. One church within the Fellowship is focusing on developing healthy marriage seminars and workshops. Greater Faith Ministries continues various types of targeted workshops on issues of sexual and domestic violence under the banner of its Health and Wellness ministry.

¹ David Emmanuel Goatley, "Preaching in a Violent Situation" in *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John S. McClure ed., 89.

Workshop Reflections

The workshops presented for this study transpired over a period of months. Pre- and post-workshop surveys were given to ascertain attendee knowledge of sexual and domestic violence. Workshops were designed to educate, inform, and enlighten attendees, and introduce resources to help improve the lives of attendees. Workshop presenters included experts in the fields of Criminal Justice and Women's and Children's Safety.

Initially it was thought that the context for the project would simply be the Greater Grand Crossing community of Chicago—the area in which the researcher's ministry is located. However, after the logistics were worked out with the presenters, it was determined that a larger venue was required for at least two of the workshops. As a result, the context for the workshops changed to the New Vision of Faith Ministries, the headquarters of the New Vision of Faith Fellowship. There are seven churches in the Fellowship, and they are all located on the south side of Chicago.

On the whole, workshops were open to members of the Fellowship churches as well as community residents. As a result, attendees came from diverse neighborhoods, but primarily from Chicago's south side.

The average attendance for each workshop was around 20 with the youth workshop having the largest turnout of the three (about 40). This was somewhat of a disappointment to the researcher. Based on conversations held prior to the workshop, the researcher had reasonable expectations of a larger attendance. A lot of time was spent networking and uncovering knowledgeable facilitators. After the workshop was held, the researcher had conversations with several individuals in which they expressed their

difficulty in attending workshops held at the church on Saturday since it is their “*day to shop and do household chores*.” There will always be excuses; nevertheless those who want the information presented will make an effort to attend no matter what. Therefore, it is the writer’s duty to continue to be a paradigm shifter—an agent of change.

Revelations from Workshop One

This workshop brought Christian leaders face to face with a structural evil of which most had only an intellectual understanding. Presenters were from the Chicago Police Department’s Domestic Violence Unit. These individuals see the terrible effects of domestic violence on victims every day. Their factual presentation brought home the stark reality of domestic violence by debunking myths, presenting statistical evidence, and detailing examples of the horror they have seen inflicted on victims.

Church leaders left the workshop with a complete packet of information that could be used in a variety of ways to help support their ministries. For example, the information could be disseminated on church bulletin boards, in church newsletters and Sunday bulletins, and on resource tables.

From the findings (pre- and post-workshop surveys), there was little statistical evidence that the clergy leaders had been exposed to new learnings. Survey results showed that clergy participants were more aware of, and in touch with, the far-reaching scope of domestic violence than the researcher had originally anticipated. This was a surprise to the researcher who had assumed (incorrectly) that the survey would show minimal knowledge of the subject by clergy coming in to the workshop

However, there was one question—“What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?”—that the researcher found surprising as she compared the responses from the pre- and post-workshop survey. As previously stated in chapter five, 100 percent of respondents in the pre-workshop survey answered the question in the following manner: *“Listen and believe the victim; tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God’s will for her life; tell her she is not alone and that help is available; let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time; seek expert assistance; consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.”* Only 80% of respondents to the post-workshop survey chose the above answer to the question. This represents a significant 20% decline (from 100% to 80%). The researcher felt this to be a pivotal question as it could be an indicator of how these church leaders might use the information gleaned from the workshop.

For that reason, the researcher designed and distributed a post-session survey to pastors within the Fellowship. Survey questions assessed whether or not the workshop spurred church leaders to move toward addressing the issue of domestic violence by making information and/or resources easily accessible to their memberships.

Once again, the researcher was surprised at the responses. The Fellowship churches were indeed working to disseminate information and to create awareness of the sin that is domestic violence. The results of the survey are repeated below.

Collect material on domestic violence and create a resource table for the dissemination of information. () yes () no
All respondents indicated “Yes.”

Place information regarding domestic violence on your church bulletin board.
 () yes () no
All respondents indicated “Yes.”

Speak out on domestic violence from the pulpit

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Place short articles pertaining to domestic violence in the church bulletin.

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Place information and handouts in the women's restroom?

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you begun educating your teens/young adults about dating violence?

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you become more adept at discerning potential domestic violence situations within your congregation?

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you become more aware of domestic violence in the news?

☐ yes ☐ no

All respondents indicated "Yes."

Have you or members of your ministerial staff sought partnerships with local agencies serving victims of domestic violence?

☐ yes ☐ no

One respondent indicated "Yes." All others responded "No."

There has been no follow-up since this brief survey was disseminated at a Fellowship pastors' meeting held in the Fall of 2009. However, based on the information compiled, it would seem that the Fellowship pastors surveyed are not only "hearers" of the Word, but "doers" of the Word as well. As we look at the data, we note the following possible influences on these church leaders:

- *Environment*

All of the Fellowship churches are located on the south side of Chicago. Members are primarily African American and working class. Unemployment abounds. The housing crisis has left many neighborhoods with boarded up houses. In this environment, the Chicago Police Department documents indicate that there are more than 16,000 reported cases of domestic violence per month.

- *Economy*

Anecdotal information reveals that a number of congregations have been affected by job losses among members. Tithes and offerings are down. Many churches are struggling to keep the doors open. In fact, several of the ministries within the Fellowship are sharing space with another ministry.

- *Size of ministry*

There are no mega churches in the Fellowship. The average congregational size is between 75-100 members. As previously stated, struggling churches are usually full of struggling people.

None of the above can be stated as statistically verifiable without a more longitudinal study. As a member of the Fellowship, the researcher intends to continue to be an advocate for education and continued proactive behavior on the issue of sexual and domestic violence. This can be done in a variety of ways including targeted workshops, suggested readings, and Bible studies in which specific scriptures (e.g., the household codes) are unpacked and reinterpreted.

This researcher believes that the workshop targeted to church leadership served its intended purpose – to inform and to educate. A lot of usable information and access to

valuable resources were provided to attendees. Most importantly, the unspoken taboo was lifted as it relates to talking openly in the church about domestic violence.

The researcher truly hopes that church leaders in the Fellowship gained new insights into the challenges and turmoil domestic violence brings to their congregants. It is important to note that this was the first such workshop targeted to pastors and lay leaders of the Fellowship. One key goal of the clergy leadership workshop was for these individuals to gain a better understanding of their role in the fight against domestic violence. It is also hoped that this cause that will makes them more aggressive in their determination to speak out. Time will tell. Following the workshop, the researcher received several positive comments from a number of the attendees.

Recommendations for Clergy

Clearly, we have a long way to go in terms of preaching, teaching, advising, and counseling. Training is key. More such workshops need to be part of the ongoing agenda of the Fellowship, and of the church in general.

In her 2005 dissertation entitled *The Clergy's Response to Domestic Violence*, Leslie Clay outlined several recommendations for clergy who choose to become more involved in the area of domestic violence. Recommendations include training, resources, education, and support.² This researcher will borrow from these recommendations.

² Clay, Leslie, "The Clergy's Response to Domestic Violence." D.Min. thesis, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, 2005, 113.

Training

- The news is filled with incidents involving the famous and the not so famous. It is unreasonable to think that the church is unaffected. The Fellowship, as well as individual churches within the Fellowship, should continue to sponsor workshops that address issues related to sexual and domestic violence. These workshops should be targeted to a variety of audiences.
- Connect clergy with resources in the community that help victims with safety, planning for security, counseling, and court support.³

Resources

- Develop a resource list for appropriate referrals, which would increase the confidence of clergy in knowing where to turn when a crisis occurs at their church.
- Make available resources such as safety plan cards, posters and pamphlets.⁴

Education

- Now that the educational process has begun, it must continue in order for its effects to have any longevity. Clergy should be educated on the dynamics of domestic violence as understood by victim advocates. The

³ Clay, 113.

⁴ Ibid.

researcher agrees with Clay who states that a good place to start is the book, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Should Know* by Reverend Al Miles. This book is an easy read that carefully details how scripture has been used to support women staying in violent homes. Miles encourages clergy to reexamine various texts and then understand that victims should never have to choose between their safety and their God. This researcher suggests that the book be read by all the Fellowship pastors and that a guided focus discussion follow.

- Continue discussions on sexual and domestic violence by bringing in community experts to facilitate educational workshops, Bible Studies, etc. for congregations within the Fellowship.
- Show videos/movies which graphically depict situations involving domestic violence. Use the videos as teachable moments to get conversations started among both youth and adult audiences.

Support

- Create a model support group that can be replicated in each of the Fellowship churches. The facilitator should be knowledgeable in the area of sexual abuse and domestic violence. “A support group will help bring some of the pain out into the open.”⁵ Although this writer is looking to help women and children who are most typically victims of domestic

⁵Phyllis A. Wilerscheidt, “Healing for Victims,” in Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser, eds., *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 24.

violence, the church also needs to look at victimizers who need separate, specialized care, counseling and support.

- Listen to her stories—with love, and without condemnation. One of the surprises to this writer was the willingness of women to share their stories of abuse. In effect, as a representative of the Church, the writer unknowingly became a vessel for the healing of women who had been abused in one way or another. God is good! We include two of *HerStories* in this paper.

Reflections on Workshop Two

As previously noted, the workshop for youth was part of a weekend of celebrations called Youth Glorifying God and sponsored by the Fellowship. The Saturday workshop followed a Friday night Jam for Jesus fest to which nearly 200 young people came out to glorify God through song, praise, dance, poetry, and ministry. Saturday's workshop was attended by approximately 40 teens and tweens. Although disappointed by the small attendance, the researcher was nevertheless favorably impressed by the extent of knowledge the teens attending the workshop had on the subject of dating violence. Based on conversations during and after the workshop, it was clear to the researcher that despite knowing the right and wrong of teen dating violence, translating that knowledge to their everyday lives is a different story.

Although the workshops were almost equally divided between boys and girls, only the girls were willing to share their experiences in open discussion. Also, only the girls wrote comments on their surveys. Some of those comments were extremely

revealing; a few comments even indicated that some of the girls knew about dating violence from personal experience.

Since the youth conference and its focus on teen dating violence, the Fellowship now brings its youth together in bi-monthly “Youth Explosions.” These explosions include praise and worship along with a message of substance targeted to the lives of teens.

Reflections on Workshop Three

The deliverables for Workshop Three were similar to those of Workshop One in that the goal was to inform and educate attendees about the sin of domestic violence. Because the workshop was given at the researcher’s home church, most of the researcher’s context associates were in attendance. Primarily for that reason, the researcher was not as surprised at the high level of knowledge attendees had on the subject.

Many discussions had been had about the project and its relevance to the work of the church. Interestingly, two of the women (one from the researcher’s home church and the other a friend of the ministry) spoke privately to the facilitator about abusive situations currently going on in their own families. For these two women, the workshop gave them an opportunity to seek out help. To date, both of these women have followed up and are getting advice and needed resources to help them through tough times.

Final Reflections

This chapter began with the words of the Lord spoken to King Solomon after the temple was dedicated by his prayer. God's promise to heal the land was conditional and based on the actions of the people. They were to humble themselves, seek His face, and give up sin.

This writer believes that those words and conditions apply to the church today. Through doctrinal teachings and preachings that support male domination over women, by not speaking truth regarding the sin of abuse and violence in the home, and by turning away from the tears of the abused, the church has aided and abetted those who perpetrate this sin in all of its disparate forms. As a result, the collective soul of the church needs to be healed. In her article contained in the book, *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Phyllis A. Willerscheidt stated the following:

The process of healing is a slow and painful journey known only to a few. . . . The stages of healing are similar to Kubler-Ross's stages of dying: anger, denial, depression, bargaining, and acceptance. The victim may go through these stages in varying degrees as well as in a different order.⁶

It is this writer's belief that the church can be a place of healing for those who have been hurt by abuse of any type. The series of informational workshops was the beginning of creating a path that may lead to healing for some.

Clearly more preaching, teaching, counseling, and pastoral care are needed on the subject of sexual abuse and domestic violence. M. Shawn Copeland believes that "the

⁶ Phyllis Willerscheidt, "Healing for Victims," in *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 26.

blood of raped, battered, abused, and murdered (black) women (and children) summons the church to its own *kenosis*. If the church is to be a credible, purified, authentic witness and servant of the message of ...love, then it must effect in its own life and structures what it preaches.”⁷

In the days and months ahead, the writer will work to assure that these beginning steps will not have been in vain. The goal of the workshops was to inform, educate and enlighten the Christian community (primarily the New Vision of Faith Fellowship) of the prevalence of sexual and domestic violence. However, the researcher’s unstated intent in delivering the workshops in the church was to create an environment conducive to open and honest conversations among God’s people on this difficult subject. Her hope was that someone in the audience would reach out for help. To her knowledge, two individuals sought help after Workshop Three was presented.

Telling HerStories

It can be said that the history of humanity can be summarized as stories told by men, primarily about men (his stories). Even the Bible hides the stories of women behind the tales of men. And so it goes—women’s voices are often silenced or muted within the context of the vision of the male. In order for the church to truly become the healing institution that this writer believes God has called it to be, the cry of Tamar and others like her must be heard and heeded.

⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, “The Wounds of Jesus: The Wounds of My People” in *Telling the Truth; Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, John S. McClure and Nancy J. Ramsay, Eds. (Cleveland: United Church Press), 45.

In her 2005 thesis entitled *The Clergy's Response to Domestic Violence*, Leslie Clay states: "Victims of domestic violence are calling out for hope and justice. They are calling out for healing and wholeness, and the Church as a community of believers has an opportunity to hear their call."⁸

Before starting her research, this writer had no idea of the impact this project would have on herself and on those around her. First, the writer had to come to grips with the abuse that lay hidden in her own family. She is the granddaughter of a violent abuser. Her mother lived eighty seven years, but never once forgot the abuse her own father inflicted on her family. The scars were definitely there. In reflection, the writer now believes that the scars of her mother's childhood ultimately colored her relationship with her husband and her own children. She loved, but never trusted. The writer also now believes that the church was her balm in Gilead. She supported her husband and was the best first lady of the church that she could be.

During the course of this project, several women in the church volunteered to share their stories with the writer. Their openness and willingness to share came as a complete surprise to the writer.

Following are the voices of two brave female survivors of domestic violence. Special thanks to both of them for their truth telling, and for trusting this writer with their stories. For both of these women, their faith has seen them through many difficult times. Fortunately for these two women, their church homes have provided some solace and a sense of belonging that has worked to keep them centered in Jesus Christ.

⁸Leslie Clay, "The Clergy's Response to Domestic Violence," D.Min. Thesis, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, December 2005.

Case Study—Micki

I have been married for nearly ten years. My husband and I have one child together, and I have another older daughter for whom my husband has served as father figure for most of her life.

My husband has always liked his beer, but he did not start drinking heavily until the summer of 2003. That was when I was hospitalized with cervical cancer and had to have a hysterectomy. We were both devastated. At the same time I was dealing with a diagnosis of a serious lung condition. After my surgery, I admit I was severely depressed. In fact, I felt worthless—not like the wife or mother I wanted to be.

It was during this time that confrontations and arguments between my husband and me became more and more frequent. It seemed like we argued about everything. I dealt with the arguments because he was doing everything to maintain the household including holding down a job, then coming home and doing the cooking, the laundry and most of the other housework. I contributed very little during that period. I could not work any longer and so I quit my job and applied for disability insurance.

Our arguments became more and more frequent, so I cut myself off from my husband, emotionally. I stopped arguing with him. As long as he argued, I shut myself off. I tried to talk with him about how I was being affected and how the kids were being affected, but there was never a good time. When I wanted to talk, he did not.

I focused on the girls. I helped them with homework, made sure they ate dinner and I put them to bed. By the time that was all over—usually around 8:30 P.M.—my husband was good and drunk and everyone in the house was frustrated and tired.

In 2007, my father came to live with the family. He was recuperating from an illness. For several months, things seemed to calm down in the household as the two men bonded. But the drinking continued. Eventually the arguments began again—even increasing in intensity. I knew I was depressed, and I thought my husband seemed depressed, but he did not want to talk about it.

Although he continued to work his job, my husband's drinking and smoking were taking a financial toll on the family. I had applied for Social Security disability so that I could bring income into the house, but that took time to get approved. Adding to our financial pressure was the fact that the girls attended private school. My husband did not want the kids in public school, so we were paying tuition in addition to a house mortgage and everything else.

All the stress of the constant arguments and worry over finances sent me to therapy. I needed help for me. I invited him to come with me, but he refused. I even talked with him about counseling with our pastors, but to no avail. I got to the point where I wanted to harm him. The entire household was unhappy, and I saw no signs of things getting better.

While my father was alive, he was the buffer. But when he died, all hell broke loose. The fights began to intensify, even involving the children. For the first time, their grades began to drop. Intimacy between me and my husband ceased. To minimize the craziness all around me, I decided to move in with my mother who happened to live in the upstairs apartment.

I used the church as my excuse to get out of the house. Every time the doors were open, I was there. My oldest daughter spent weekends away with friends and relatives,

and my youngest daughter simply followed me wherever I went. I lived in fear that my husband would hurt me or the kids in a drunken rage.

That was when I knew that it was time to take the girls and leave, but the verbal abuse continues through constant phone calls. I have even taken out an order of protection because I am afraid of what he might do if he gets angry enough. I thank God for a supportive church family who continue to be there for me and my children.

Case Study 2—Jennifer

When I was seven years old, I contracted polio. My mother had gotten me vaccinated, but it totally paralyzed me from the mouth down. I had to be fed intravenously. I could not talk. While I was sick, Mom met the love of her life, a Marine. They finally got married. At first, he was nice and kind. My brother and I liked him.

Things went along okay for about a year, and then it all broke down. We had a lot of rules in the house, probably because of my stepfather's Marine background. At dinner, you could eat what you wanted, but what you did not eat was saved for the next day. One day my brother was punished for eating an extra pork chop. Both of us got punished. Punishments were always extreme. For example, we were made to sit on the floor with our legs crossed and our arms over our head. We had to stay that way for a long time. Because we were kids, my brother and I made a game of these punishments. We would start talking and having fun. When our stepfather heard us, we were then separated and put in a small hallway. Both of us were told to stand on one foot with the other leg up. We had to stay that way for a long time.

Our step-grandfather sexually terrorized me. He masturbated in front of me. The first time was when he caught me alone in the cellar. One time he threw me on the bed and put his penis between my legs, but he didn't penetrate me. I hated going to my step-grandmother's house because of him. I was fifteen years old at the time. I never told my mother because I did not want to get in trouble. He never threatened me or anyone else. But he consistently looked for opportunities to be alone with me, and he would do what he could do to me.

My family moved from Providence, Rhode Island to Milwaukee, Wisconsin when I was seventeen. That was when I told my mother what the step-grandfather had done to me. That was also when the violence with my stepfather increased. I probably would not have been beaten if I had been an obedient child. He would beat me until I was black and blue and all shades in between, but Mother did not do anything about it even though she was there when I got beat. One time I was beaten so badly that I showed my mother my behind. She took me in the bedroom and showed him what he had done to me. He stopped beating my brother and me for a while, but then he turned his rage onto my mother. My brother and I would wake up in the middle of the night hearing our mother crying out.

We lived in Milwaukee for eighteen months and then moved to Chicago. My stepfather started beating my brother and me on the palm of our hands. He would hit us with all of his manly strength. My brother was beaten on his back. He was traumatized so badly that he wet the bed until he was fourteen.

My mother had two other children with my stepfather. As adults, each of us has had to deal with issues related to the trauma we suffered as children. I believe my brother has suffered even more than the rest of us. He started using drugs and alcohol early in life, and although he served in the military, it did not really help him. He has always had problems. Once he got out of the military, he took a job with the post office and had a tumultuous time there—ultimately losing his job, and finally suing to get it back.

I was the most resilient child, but it was only because I grasped on to the Lord with all my heart. I married my husband when I was twenty. He was not saved. The movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark” got my husband curious about the Ark of the Covenant,

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP ONE—MARKETING TOOLS AND HANDOUTS



*Is someone in your church wearing masks...
one side happy, the other side sad?*

**New Vision of Faith Fellowship
and the
Chicago Police Department's
Domestic Violence Unit
Invite You to a
Special Informational Workshop**

Saturday, June 20, 2009

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Workshop

447 W. 120th St.

Chicago, IL (enter church on 120th street side)

Did You Know?

- Over 16,000 cases of domestic violence are reported in Chicago, IL each month
- 1 in 3 women in the United States have experienced violence in a relationship at one point in their lives.

What do these statistics mean to you and your congregation?

Many women in your congregation are living in abusive relations (suffering in silence), hoping against hope that prayer will change things.

You can be the answer to prayer!

Attend this informational workshop and you can become a source of hope, information and referrals to resources that could ultimately save a life.

For more information and to RSVP call (773) 374-7514

Or email haking5170@aol.com

**Domestic Violence Workshop
June 20, 2009
Sponsored by the
New Vision of Faith Fellowship**

Pre-Test

(Check all you think apply)

- I. What is domestic violence?**
 - a. A pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another.**
 - b. A lover's quarrel.**
 - c. A private family matter.**
 - d. May consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.**
 - e. A and D**

- II. Who are the victims of domestic violence?**
 - a. 95% of victims are women.**
 - b. Children are often involved.**
 - c. Men are sometimes involved.**
 - d. All of the above.**

- III. How prevalent is domestic violence?**
 - a. According to surveys from the U.S. and Canada, domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages.**
 - b. According to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic-related calls for service are reported each month.**
 - c. One in four women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.**
 - d. All of the above.**

- IV. What are the types of domestic violence?**
 - a. Physical assault**
 - b. Sexual assault**
 - c. Psychological assault**
 - d. Attacks against property and pets**
 - e. Economic/financial control**
 - f. All of the above.**

- V. How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?**
 - a. Physical evidence including frequent bruises, broken bones, etc.**
 - b. Emotional abuse including harassment, stalking excessively possessive, controlling or jealous behavior**

- c. Isolation of victim
- d. All of the above.

VI. Who are batterers?

- a. Batterers come from all class backgrounds, races and religions.
- b. Batterers are unemployed.
- c. Batterers are employed.
- d. Batterers are blue-collar.
- e. Batterers are professionals.
- f. Batterers are Christians.
- g. Batterers are non-Christians.
- h. All of the above.

VII. What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

- a. Listen and believe the victim.
- b. Tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her life.
- c. Tell her she is not alone and that help is available.
- d. Let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- e. Seek expert assistance.
- f. Hold the abuser accountable.
- g. Consider reconciliation only after above steps are taken.
- h. All of the above.

- According to the Chicago Police Department, approximately 17,000 domestic-related calls for service are reported each month.
- 1 in 4 women in the United States will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Dear Pastor:

You recently attended a domestic violence informational workshop sponsored by the New Vision of Faith Fellowship. It is our hope that the information was beneficial to you and will ultimately help you help your congregation.

This follow-up letter is designed to ascertain how you plan to use this information in the days and weeks ahead.

Based on the information gleaned from that workshop, what can/will you do?

Collect material on domestic violence and create a resource table for the dissemination of information. ☐ yes ☐ no

Place information regarding domestic violence on your church bulletin board.
☐ yes ☐ no

Speak out on domestic violence from the pulpit
☐ yes ☐ no

Place short articles pertaining to domestic violence in the church bulletin.
☐ yes ☐ no

Place information and hand-outs in the women's restroom?
☐ yes ☐ no

Have you begun educating your teens/young adults about dating violence?
☐ yes ☐ no

Have you become more adept at discerning potential domestic violence situations within your congregation?
☐ yes ☐ no

Have you become more aware of domestic violence in the news?
☐ yes ☐ no

Have you or members of your ministerial staff sought partnerships with local agencies serving victims of domestic violence?
☐ yes ☐ no

Thank you for your responses.

The Religious Community Addressing Domestic Violence

The Chicago Police Department Domestic Violence Program

3510 S Michigan
Chicago, IL 60653
312-745-6340

If you or someone you know are in
immediate danger Call 911

For additional information, assistance
and resources you may call the free,
confidential, multilingual 24 hour City of
Chicago Helpline at 1-877-TO-END-DV

This booklet is designed to provide leaders of faith communities with information surrounding the issue of domestic violence and to assist them in creating a unified response to domestic violence. Additionally this booklet contains information to provide families, friends and the community with recognizing the warning signs of unhealthy/abusive relationships as well as information on safety planning, available resources, and tips on helping family members and friends.

Domestic Violence Dynamics

Causes

- **Domestic violence is a learned behavior**
 - It is not caused by
 - ❖ Substance Abuse
 - ❖ Mental Illness
 - ❖ Impulse Control Disorder
 - ❖ Stress
 - ❖ Behavior of the victim or problems in the relationship

- **Domestic violence cuts across all socio-economic groups**
 - ❖ Every racial and ethnic group
 - ❖ Every economic group
 - ❖ Every occupation
 - ❖ Heterosexual and same sex-relationships

Domestic Violence Dynamics

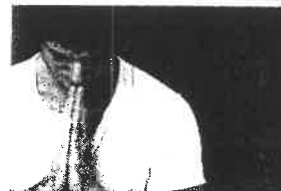
Effects on Victims

- Living in fear
- Sense of helplessness about the situation, feeling trapped, isolated and alone
- Numbness
- Low self-esteem
- Denial of the seriousness of the abuse
- Self blame and feelings of guilt
- Feelings of anger



Effects on Victims

- Depression and suicidal thoughts
- Physical problems and illnesses related to injuries or stress
- Traumatic stress symptoms
 - Flashbacks
 - Intrusive thoughts of violent events
 - Exaggerated startle response
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Difficult concentrating



TACTICS USED BY ABUSIVE FAMILY MEMBERS

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- ▼ Slaps, hits, punches
- ▼ Throws things
- ▼ Burns
- ▼ Chokes
- ▼ Breaks bones

SEXUAL ABUSE

- ▼ Makes demeaning remarks about intimate body parts
- ▼ Is rough with intimate body parts during caregiving
- ▼ Takes advantage of physical or mental illness to engage in sex
- ▼ Forces you to perform sex acts that make you feel uncomfortable or against your wishes
- ▼ Forces you to watch pornographic movies

ABUSING DEPENDENCIES/NEGLECT

- ▼ Takes walker, wheelchair, glasses, dentures
- ▼ Takes advantage of confusion
- ▼ Denies or creates long waits for food, heat, care or medication
- ▼ Does not report medical problems
- ▼ Understands but fails to follow medical, therapy or safety recommendations
- ▼ Makes you miss medical appointments

THREATS/INTIMIDATION

- ▼ Threatens to leave, divorce, commit suicide or institutionalize
- ▼ Abuses or kills pets or prized livestock
- ▼ Destroys property
- ▼ Displays or threatens with weapons

RIDICULING VALUES/SPIRITUALITY

- ▼ Denies access to church or clergy
- ▼ Makes fun of personal values
- ▼ Ignores or ridicules religious/cultural traditions

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- ▼ Humiliates, demeans, ridicules
- ▼ Yells, insults, calls names
- ▼ Degrades, blames
- ▼ Withholds affection
- ▼ Engages in crazy-making behavior
- ▼ Uses silence or profanity

USING FAMILY MEMBERS

- ▼ Magnifies disagreements
- ▼ Misleads members about extent and nature of illnesses/conditions
- ▼ Excludes or denies access to family
- ▼ Forces family to keep secrets

ISOLATION

- ▼ Controls what you do, who you see, and where you go
- ▼ Limits time with friends and family
- ▼ Denies access to phone or mail

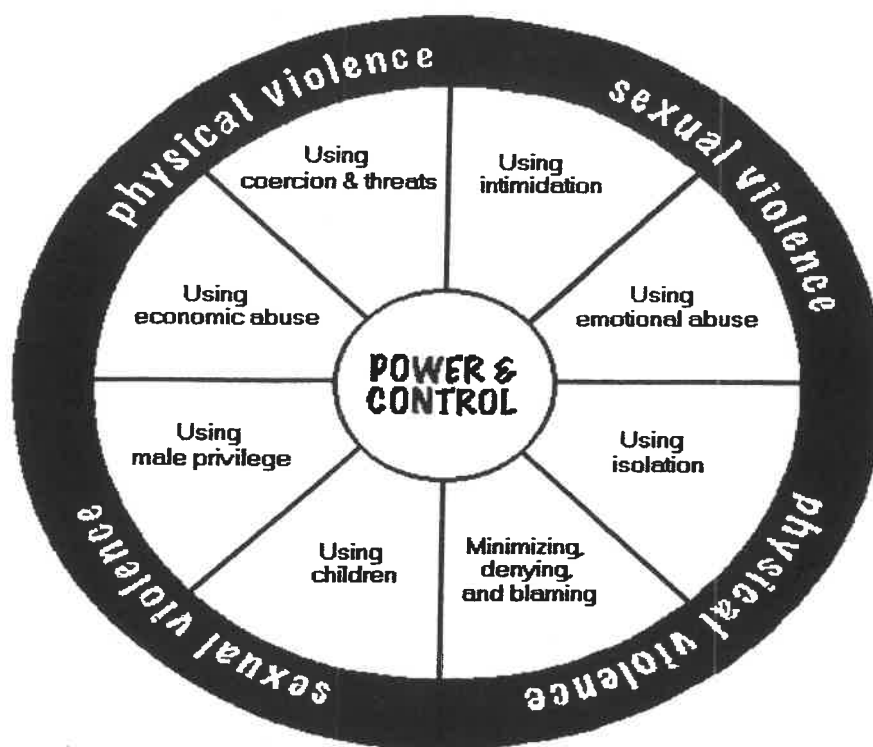
USING PRIVILEGE

- ▼ Treats you like a servant
- ▼ Makes all major decisions

FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

- ▼ Steals money, titles, or possessions
- ▼ Takes over accounts and bills and spending without permission
- ▼ Abuses a power of attorney

POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



- ➡ **INTIMIDATION:** Instill fear through looks, actions, gestures, loud noises, smashing things and destroying property.
- ➡ **EMOTIONAL ABUSE:** Using put downs, name calling, or mind games. To make the victim feel bad about themselves or think they are crazy.
- ➡ **ISOLATION:** Controls who the victim talks to, sees, where they go and what they do.
- ➡ **MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING:** Blaming the victim for the assault. To make the assault seem less painful, less traumatic and to make the victim feel they caused the assault.
- ➡ **CHILDREN:** To make victim feel guilty about the children. Using visitation to harass victim. Use children to keep victim from reporting assault.
- ➡ **MALE PRIVILEGE:** Treating female victims like a servant. Making all the "big" decisions. Acting like the master of the castle.
- ➡ **ECONOMIC ABUSE:** Preventing victim from obtaining or keeping a job. Making victim ask for money. Taking victim's money.
- ➡ **COERCION AND THREATS:** Making and/or carrying out threats to do something hurt victim emotionally. Threaten to assault, spread rumors, threaten to talk the children or commit suicide.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: *Domestic violence is a private family matter.*

FACT: Domestic violence - also called spouse abuse, battering, family violence, abuse and wife beating - is not just a family problem. It is a crime with serious repercussions.

MYTH: *The violence isn't really serious.*

FACT: Domestic violence can involve threats, pushing, punching, slapping, choking, sexual assault, and assault with weapons. It is rarely a one-time occurrence and usually escalates in frequency and severity over time. Any act of domestic violence is something to take seriously.

MYTH: *Victims provoke their partner's violence.*

FACT: Victims never control a batterer's use of violence. Victims are not to blame nor do they ever deserve such abuse. Whatever problems exist in a relationship, the use of violence is never justified or acceptable.

MYTH: *No one would beat their pregnant wife or girlfriend.*

FACT: Domestic violence often begins or escalates during pregnancy. Testimony before Congress indicated that 50% of abusive husbands batter their pregnant wives. Other statistics show that between 25% and 40% of battered women were assaulted while pregnant.

MYTH: *Domestic violence committed by women against men is equivalent to the domestic violence men commit against women.*

FACT: Although some women do commit violent acts against men, women rarely subject men to the coercive control, physical intimidation, chronic fear, isolation, entrapment, rape and stalking which are hallmarks of battering.

MYTH: Domestic violence doesn't happen in my neighborhood.

FACT: Domestic violence occurs among all ages, races and religions. It happens to people of all educational and income levels. It happens in heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender relationships. It happens everywhere.

MYTH: Batterers are mentally ill.

FACT: Battering is a learned behavior, not a mental illness. Abuser's experiences as children and the messages they get from society in general tell them that violence is an effective means to achieve power and control over their partners. Batterers are accountable for their actions.

MYTH: Drug and alcohol abuse causes domestic violence.

FACT: Batterers frequently make excuses for their violence, claiming loss of control due to alcohol or drug use, or extreme stress. Although drug and alcohol abuse may intensify existing violent behavior, it does not cause domestic violence.

MYTH: It is easy for a victim to leave their abuser.

FACT: There are many, many reasons why it is difficult for a victim to leave.

- Studies show that the battered person is at greatest risk when they attempt to leave. The partner may have used violence when they tried to leave in the past.
- They may not know about available resources to assist them.
- If they are financially dependent on their partner and leave with their children they will likely face severe hardships.
- Social and justice systems may have been unresponsive, insensitive or ineffective in the past.
- Religious, cultural or family pressures may make them believe it is their duty to keep their marriage together at all costs.
- Their emotional ties to their partner may still be strong, supporting their hope that the violence will end. For most of us, the decision to end a relationship is not an easy one.

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CENTRALIZED TRAINING INSTITUTE



CHICAGO METROPOLITAN
BATTERED WOMEN'S NETWORK

220 S. State St., Suite 2108
Chicago, IL 60604

TEL 312.360.1924 • FAX 312.360.1927 • TTY 312.360.1928
call the City of Chicago's Domestic Violence Helpline: 877.863.6338; TTY 877.863.6339

WARNING SIGNS OF A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

Does your partner....?

- try to control where you go and who you see
- exhibit constant jealousy
- identify with the macho-male image (if male)
- use drugs and/or alcohol
- come from an abusive home (if male)
- lose his/her temper easily
- blame others for his/her actions
- use aggressive language
- restrict you/tell you what to do
- tell you that you are worthless
- act one way in public and another in private; Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- embarrass you in front of others
- always want to have his/her own way
- not support your relationships with family and friends
- act very self-centered
- believe he/she can be violent without any consequences
- blame you for any problems in the relationship
- control the finances
- expect you to agree with his/her ideas
- threaten to hurt you or your children
- constantly accuse you of cheating
- not support your activities at home, school or work
- check up on you constantly at work, on your cellphone, etc.
- destroy or hide your personal property or sentimental items
- apologize every time he/she is hurts you, promises never to do it again, but ends up doing it again anyhow
- tell you you're crazy or that you need "help"
- explain his/her behavior as "It was out of my control" or "I need help managing my anger"
- tell you that if you would change, then he/she wouldn't have to hurt you

Do you feel...?

- sorry for him/her
- flattered by all of his/her attention
- if you could do everything that he/she asks, the violence/abuse would stop
- afraid to break-up because he/she has threatened you
- you are the only person who loves and understands him/her enough to help him/her
- you should stay with him/her because you had a child with him/her
- his/her possessiveness/jealousy proves his/her love for you
- afraid that if you end the relationship, he/she will hurt himself/herself or someone else
- things will work out and get better on their own
- when you are married/have kids he/she won't have a reason to feel insecure about your love for him/her
- no one understands that you really love him/her
- the violence/abuse is your fault
- no one else will love you
- he/she is the only one in your life you can depend on
- stuck because you have no where else to go
- guilty about leaving when he/she seems to need you so much
- torn between your feelings and what your head is telling you
- confused about the differences between what he/she says and what he does
- guilty about "taking your children away" from their parent
- responsible for helping him/her change
- "trapped", like you deserve the way he treats you and therefore you have to put up with it
- you will not be able to manage your children on your own and it is better to have an abusive parent than none at all
- sorry for him/her because he/she has never been loved and therefore has a difficult time showing it
- that because he is sick (with physical illness, or with an addiction) you have to stay with him
- that when you vowed "for better or for worse" it included abusive behavior

Recognizing Domestic Violence in Your Congregation

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence occurs when one person tries to control an intimate partner, ex-partner or family member through the use of physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and/or economic abuse and violence. Examples of abuse include physical assaults such as hitting, choking and stabbing, verbal attacks and threats, and being isolated from sources of support. Domestic violence is a crime and NO ONE deserves to be abused.

Why is it so hard to leave?

There are numerous reasons why a victim may have difficulty getting out of an abusive relationship including lack of resources and cultural or religious beliefs. However, fear for their personal safety is usually one of the most important factors.

The frequency and severity of violence often escalates when a victim tries to end an abusive relationship. During this time the victim is at greatest risk for being stalked and even killed by their abuser. A victim may also have difficulty ending an abusive marriage because they fear they will be ostracized from their religious community. This is why your assistance as a faith leader and/or community plays a crucial role in responding to domestic violence.

What are Some of the Warning Signs to Look For?

If a member of your congregation is....

- Consistently showing up late for or missing religious meetings, services or events
- Regularly dressing inappropriately for the weather such as wearing turtlenecks in the summer and sunglasses indoors
- Frequently having "accidents" that cause bruises or broken bones
- Appearing depressed, tired, overly stressed and/or anxious especially around their partner

....they may be a victim of domestic violence

If a member of your congregation is....

- Consistently criticizing and making demeaning comments about their partner
- Frequently losing their temper and acting abusive towards other members of the congregation
- Consistently preventing their partner from participating in religious meetings and social events
- Overly controlling of their partner
- Openly talking about orders of protection and/or court dates

....they may be a perpetrator of domestic violence

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What Can the Church Do?

The following are suggested response to family violence:

1. Invite family violence prevention advocates to teach how to detect cases of abuse. When you know or suspect abuse or neglect, report it to the proper authorities.
2. Provide counsel and support to the abused. It is important that clergy, who may not have experience with abuse cases, know community services to which victims may be referred for help if you need information we will provide helpline cards.
3. Do not attempt to counsel a couple together when there is violence in the relationship.
4. Establish or sponsor a self-help group for families involved in child abuse.
5. Establish or sponsor a self-help group for adults who were sexually abused as children.
6. Establish or expand the church's family ministries program to include parenting classes, a family support network, and other services as needed and as feasible. It may also be helpful if the church affirms a broader concept of family than of the traditional nuclear family. If factors prohibit the church from establishing some needed service, join with other churches in offering the service.
7. Establish a safe house where women and children can seek refuge in time of crisis. Various community groups coordinate safehouse programs and will train and prepare you to provide this service.
8. Encourage clergy and laypeople to secure more indepth training to be able to minister to abused people, many of whom have theological questions and doubts about their faith.
9. Have available at the church public service pamphlets and brochures about the various types of family violence and services to those involved in the violence. Past crisis numbers on the church bulletin board.
10. During National Domestic violence Week in October, select family violence prevention as a sermon topic.
11. Stage a theater production that dramatizes the issues involved in family violence. Follow the presentation with an audience discussion.
12. Find out what your state is doing to respond to family violence. Determine where gaps exist in preventive services and support legislation that provides needed services.
13. Promote passage of legislation in regards to family violence.
14. Officer seminars on the legal alternatives for abused spouses and family members and for elderly abused people.
15. Establish a voluntary assistance program or volunteer with a community program to provide services for the elderly and relief for people who care for the elderly.



Domestic Violence and the Religious Community

Become a safe place for victims.

- Make your congregation a place where victims of domestic violence can come for help.
- Show your members that your congregation won't avoid the problem.
- Prominently display brochures and posters that include the phone numbers of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in your area.
- Have emergency number posters and Order of Protection Cards in women's bathrooms.

Educate the congregation.

- Have short monthly articles about family violence, date rape, impact of violence on children, etc. in your newsletter and on bulletin boards.
- Include information on and perhaps assessment of domestic violence in marriage prep classes and teen group meetings.
- Learn what local junior high and high schools do to educate young people about violence and reinforce their efforts.

Speak out.

- Speak on domestic violence from the pulpit.
- Encourage members of the congregation to speak against language and attitudes that promote violence.
- Have the men's group to actively support non-violence against women, children and seniors.

Lead by example.

- Have volunteers from your congregation serve on the board of local domestic violence programs.

Collaborate with existing resources.

- Include local domestic violence agencies in your community's tithing and service projects.
- Encourage members of the congregation to volunteer for non-violence agencies and activities.

Be a resource.

- Collect material on domestic violence as it affects women, seniors, children and men to better understand the dynamic of family violence.
- Attend local workshops on domestic violence.

Intervene.

- If you suspect violence is occurring in a relationship, speak privately to the possible victim. Help them plan for leaving and let them know the local resources.
- Refer the victim to a professional domestic violence counselor rather than counsel the victim.

Why Women Don't Tell Clergy About the Abuse

1. Fear of retribution if the batterer learns that she has talked about the violence.

- She may not know information told to her minister is confidential.
- She may fear her minister will report the abuse to the police or try to talk to the batterer about his behavior, which may further endanger her and the children.
- She may be isolated and unable to see her minister without her batterer being present.
- Her batterer may have told her if she tells anyone she and the children will be killed.

2. Shame and humiliation.

- She may feel responsible for the abuse and responsible for "making it better".
- She may believe she is the only one in an abusive relationship, particularly within the congregation.
- She may not think she is good enough to be helped.
- Her cultural, ethnic, and religious background may influence her response to the abuse.

3. She feels protective of her relationship.

- Her partner may be the only, or primary, source of financial support for the family.
- He is not always abusive and there are good times in the relationship.
- He may be well respected, holding a position of authority within the church or community.
- He may say he will change and she wants to believe the violence won't happen again.

4. She may believe her minister:

- is unwilling to get involved.
- will not be able to understand her feelings and fears about the violence and the relationship.
- make her feel responsible for the violence, and condemn her for destroying the family.
- cannot help her or help her locate resources in the community.

ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT¹

WHAT SPECIAL PROTECTIONS DOES THE LAW PROVIDE TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

In *Calloway v. Kinkelaar*, the Illinois Supreme Court found that the IDVA created a "specially protected class of individuals to whom statutorily mandated duties are owed."² Law enforcement officers are not subject to civil liability for any act of omission or commission when they are acting in good faith in rendering emergency assistance or otherwise enforcing the IDVA, unless the act is a result of willful or wanton misconduct. Therefore, a domestic violence victim has a right of action against a police department if the victim can show that:

- "he or she is a person in need of protection under the Act,
- the statutory law enforcement duties owed to him or her were breached by the willful and wanton acts or omissions of law enforcement officers, and
- such conduct proximately caused plaintiff's injuries."

Willful or wanton conduct is defined as action, which if not intentional, shows an utter indifference to or conscious disregard for the safety of another person.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE IDVA?

The IDVA protects victims of domestic violence who are related to the abuser in one of the following ways:

- related by blood or by present or prior marriage;
- share or formerly shared a common dwelling (apartment or home);
- have or allegedly have a child in common;
- share or allegedly share a blood relationship through a child; or
- have or have had a dating or engagement relationship.

In addition, an adult with disabilities can obtain an order of protection against his/her personal assistant or caregiver. The IDVA incorporates the definition of caregiver from the Criminal Abuse or Neglect of an Elderly Person or Person with a Disability statute (720 ILCS 5/12-21 (b)). In addition to persons who would already come under the IDVA, this definition adds caregivers who are employed by the person with disabilities to

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² *Calloway v. Kinkelaar*, 659 N.E.2d 1322, 1327 (IL 1995).

provide for the victim's health and personal care and persons who have been appointed by a private or public agency or by a court of competent jurisdiction to provide for the victim's health and personal care.

Any person who lives in the petitioner's household can be listed as a protected person on the petitioner's Order of Protection, whether or not such persons have a family or household relationship with the respondent. A protected person can sign a criminal complaint as a victim of the criminal offense of violation of order of protection.

Anyone can file for an order of protection on behalf of a person who is prevented by age, disability, health or inaccessibility from filing on their own behalf, but such an order cannot be extended over the objections of the victim.

WHAT IS AN ORDER OF PROTECTION (OP)?

An Order of Protection (OP) is a court order that prohibits the abuser from committing certain behaviors or orders him to perform certain acts. Violation of an Order of Protection can result in the abuser being found in contempt of court, resulting in fine or incarceration, or criminal charges, carrying penalties up to three years under certain circumstances.

HOW CAN AN ORDER OF PROTECTION BE OBTAINED?

CIVIL COURT: An Order of Protection can be obtained in civil court in an independent proceeding, meaning that it is not connected to any other case, or in conjunction with any civil case in which the parties are the same, such as a divorce, custody, paternity, or probate case. Petitioners seeking an Order of Protection in civil court are advised to seek legal assistance.

By local court rule, when the parties to an Order of Protection have or have had a divorce or paternity case, the Order of Protection must be obtained in the court where that case is or was heard. In Chicago, these cases are heard at the Daley Center.

CRIMINAL COURT: An Order of Protection can be obtained in criminal court only as part of a criminal case in which the petitioner for the OP is the victim and the respondent to the OP is the defendant. The State's Attorney's Office represents the victim/petitioner for the OP.

JUVENILE COURT: An Order of Protection can be obtained in Juvenile Court in abuse and neglect or delinquency proceedings.

WHERE CAN ORDERS OF PROTECTION ARE OBTAINED IN CHICAGO?

In Chicago, the new centralized Domestic Violence Court at 555 West Harrison Street has several types of courtrooms:

- civil courtrooms, where independent Orders of Protection can be obtained.
- misdemeanor courtrooms, where all misdemeanor cases from Chicago involving family or household members are heard; and
- a felony preliminary hearing courtroom, where felony cases (other than murder) involving family or household members who are intimate partners are heard.

Officers should refer victims to 555 West Harrison Street under the following circumstances:

- to file misdemeanor criminal charges and obtain an Order of Protection;
- to obtain an Order of Protection following an arrest for a misdemeanor;
- to obtain an independent Order of Protection when the victim does not wish to pursue criminal charges and the parties have not had a divorce or paternity case filed.

FELONY CASES:

Orders of Protection can be obtained as part of a felony case, in bond court, at the preliminary hearing or at any time during the trial process. An OP will not be available at 555 W. Harrison Street in the criminal courtrooms unless the felony charge is already in the system and the case is up for the preliminary hearing. Victims may also get an Order of Protection in civil court.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES AND DURATION OF ORDER OF PROTECTION?

There are three types of orders:

Emergency Order: The emergency order is valid for a period of time between 14 days and 21 days. It can be entered without notice to the respondent if the petitioner alleges that the abuse she or he is trying to prevent would be likely to occur if the respondent were given notice or any more notice than was actually given. An emergency order may not grant counseling, temporary custody, payment of support, monetary compensation, or reimbursement of shelter costs, nor can the order prohibit possession of weapons.

Interim Order: An interim order is valid for up to 30 days. It is issued after the respondent has been served or the petitioner has served notice on the respondent and has satisfied the court that she or he is diligently attempting to complete the required service of process. An interim order may not include the counseling, payment of support or monetary compensation, shelter reimbursement or weapons remedies unless the respondent has filed a general appearance or has been personally served.

Plenary Order: Plenary orders of protection can be valid for varying lengths of time. If entered in conjunction with a divorce, it can run for the life of the final decree; if in conjunction with a criminal offense, for the length of the defendant's sentence plus two years; and in conjunction with any proceeding, until the conclusion of the case. An independent order is valid for a fixed period of time not to exceed two years.

WHAT IS THE "BURDEN OF PROOF" FOR AN ORDER OF PROTECTION?

The Order of Protection proceeding is always civil in nature regardless of the courtroom in which it is heard. The civil burden of proof is preponderance of the evidence, that is, the evidence shows that the allegations of the case are more likely true than not true.

FEES

There are no fees for filing or serving orders of protection. A respondent will have to pay an appearance fee, which can be waived if the respondent is indigent.



Helpful Websites

- www.ChicagoCAC.org (Chicago Children's Advocacy Center)
- www.nationalcac.org (National Children's Advocacy Center)
- www.nca-online.org (National Children's Alliance)
- www.state.il.us/dcfs (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services)
- www.chicagopolice.org (Chicago Police Department)
- www.statesattorney.org (Cook County State's Attorney's Office)
- www.ccbhs.org (Cook County Bureau of Health Services)
- www.missingkids.org (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
- www.preventchildabuseillinois.org (Prevent Child Abuse Illinois)
- www.preventchildabuse.org (Prevent Child Abuse America)
- www.ag.state.il.us (Illinois Attorney General's Office)
- www.trynova.org (National Organization for Victim Assistance)
- www.cwla.org (Child Welfare League of America)
- www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb (Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services)
- www.isp.state.il.us/sor (Sex Offender Registration Information)
- www.aap.org (American Academy of Pediatrics) * great things kids can do for themselves on this website
- www.kidshealth.org (KidsHealth Organization)

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